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DORINDA.

VOL. III.

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DORINDA

Part 109

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BY

THE COUNTESS OF MUNSTER

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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1 HANDY ACADEMY OF ART culture AND LANG.





DORINDA.

CHAPTER I.

148
B.

‘Disdain and scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprising what they look on ; and her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak. She cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endear’d !’

‘Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune’s womb,
Is coming toward me ; and my inward soul,
With nothing trembles !’



HE new batch of visitors had arrived. One evening a lady, who was examining the curiosities in one of the glass-cases, exclaimed

at the beauty of a small enamelled box, set in filagree silver; and begged to know its history. The Comtesse good-naturedly took it out, and opening it, showed an inscription inside the lid, stating it had been a gift from the wicked Catherine de Medicis, and that it was a ‘poison-box;’ for, upon touching a spring, a silver tongue, forked like a serpent’s, sprang up, and pricked the hand that held it.

‘But I have two others,’ added the Comtesse; ‘one given by Charles IX., and the other by Marie Stuart; but I do not see them here! *Voyons!* How very strange! They were all together. They must have been placed in the wrong case!’

But search was made high and low;—

the missing jewels were nowhere to be found, and, upon going over one or two other glass-cases, many valuables were missed!

The Comtesse was inconsolable, but دورینده غمگین not more so than Monsieur de Bonneval, who aided in the search, and was most excited and indignant at the loss. The guests were all much distressed, and thus the evening, which had begun so pleasantly, ended in ^{great terror} consternation! بزرگ وحشت

At the midday *déjeuner*, however, the next day, Monsieur de Bonneval, to the great relief of all present, announced that the missing jewels were, after all, not lost! but that he remembered seeing them not long ago at the Comtesse's jeweller in Paris, whither they had been sent to be cleaned;

and that the housekeeper in Paris had been written to and desired to forward them at once by a trusty messenger, but that, this functionary being absent on a holiday, the Comtesse could not hear from her for a few days.

The Comtesse heard Monsieur de Bonneval's statement with apparent surprise, and assured him he was mistaken; but he was so positive as to having himself *seen* them at the jeweller's that, perforce, she was convinced.

During the *déjeûner*, the post arrived, and a letter was brought to Monsieur de Bonneval, who, after reading it, looked much annoyed, and said to the Comtesse:

‘*Ma cousine !* What is to be done ?

This is a letter from my old Portuguese friend, the Baron de Lerida.'

'I never heard of him,' said the Comtesse.

'Oh! you must. He is a very old friend of mine,—and stone deaf, poor old fellow! and the only happiness he knows is collecting curiosities, and visiting the collections of other people. He is dying to see yours—in fact, to pay you a visit. But, *ma chère*, that is quite impossible. I could not inflict such an old bore upon you. If it were only himself, poor old man! I should not mind; for I could have relieved you of him; but he is always obliged, in consequence of delicate health, to travel under the charge of an old Portuguese servant, who speaks

nothing but his own language. I think you had better catch the old baron, *ma cousine*, and put him under one of your glass-cases, as an antediluvian curiosity! But, joking apart, how *can* I get out of it? I will write to say the Château is full.'

‘Oh, poor old man! let him come,’ said the Comtesse, kindly. ‘There is plenty of room, and I daresay he won’t stay very long. Pray!—pray don’t refuse him!’

‘Oh, thank you, dear Marie! How kind you are! He will arrive to-morrow, or the next day, if I give him leave. I will write at once.’

So the old Portuguese arrived the next evening, was courteously received by the benevolent Comtesse, expressed himself

overwhelmed by her condescension, and apologised humbly for his servant's presence and his own affliction.

Meantime Monsieur de Bonneval, anxious to relieve the Comtesse of his somewhat antiquatedly ceremonious friend's presence, carried him off, (as soon after his arrival as he could with civility do so,) to inspect the glass-cases, the contents of which seemed to overwhelm the old *virtuoso* with admiration. He was in due course presented to the prince and princess, and plaintively expressed his regret at his inability 'to hear and enjoy the sweet sounds which must emanate from so perfect a mouth as madame's,' and complimented the prince on so lovely a bride,

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whose musical talents, he declared, were spoken of far and wide.

Finally, with many excuses, the deaf old baron entreated Monsieur de Bonneval to ask the Comtesse's leave for his servant (Pedro) to wait behind his chair during dinner, adding that 'he alone knew his afflicted master's wants.' Leave was of course given at once, and the old man subsided,—seeming perfectly happy.

At dinner that night, Dorinda, clad in simple white, with no ornament but the girdle of precious stones, looked especially lovely, and was in the highest spirits. The prince watched his wife with pride and delight ; but great would have been his surprise had he remarked the expression of the

Portuguese servant Pedro's face, when first he beheld her!—and greater still, had he overheard the few words hastily exchanged between Pedro and his master; the latter apparently forgetting his deafness, and the former his Portuguese, when he said, in excellent French,

‘Allons—j’y suis!’

‘Mais comment donc?’

‘Notre joli vis-à-vis.’

‘Pst!’

The evening passed pleasantly enough; and the baron was no trouble, being appropriated by Monsieur de Bonneval, who took him all over the old house, even into the visitors' rooms!

.

The next morning Dorinda, simply but beautifully dressed, descended into the rose-garden to pluck a bunch of flowers, wherewith to adorn her gown. As she flitted in and out of the rose-bushes, like a beautiful dragon-fly, she little knew how cautiously she was being watched from one of the Château casements.

Singing a graceful little French ballad, she returned into the house, and was carelessly passing through the museum gallery, when she was confronted by the old Baron de Lerida and his servant. Smilingly she wished the baron 'Good-morning,' when the servant pushed forward, and, without a word, displaced his long beard and moustache!

In a moment Dorinda recognised Au-

guste Laménotte, the *coiffeur* of Glittersea, her old helpmate, and whilom useful slave ! She stopped,—gazed stupidly at him ; then—a confused rush of memories,—her school-life, the Woodcocks, the cheque, her first lover,—all seemed to rise as phantoms before her, arresting the very flow of her life-blood ; and when the Frenchman slowly pointed, first at her, and then threateningly at the glass-case, she lost all control over herself, and giving one shriek, ‘Auguste !’ she fell heavily to the ground.

That shriek had been heard, not only by the immediate cause of it, but also by another, who had been anxiously awaiting Dorinda’s return. The prince rushed into the gallery, and, with amazement stamped on his coun-

tenance, wound his arms tenderly round his (really this time) unconscious wife, and carried her into her own apartments.

After laying her gently on her bed, he called Estelle, and did not leave her till she gave signs of returned consciousness; then, with a look of determination on his face, but a curious sinking at his heart, and a dread—he knew not of what—he left the room in search of the baron and his servant, to find out from them, if possible, the cause of his wife's fainting.

Thinking to find the baron in the garden, he was hastily passing the Comtesse's private rooms, when the door of her *boudoir* opened, and, to his surprise, the very men he sought issued therefrom; and,

approaching the prince with much respect, informed him that the Comtesse d'Alemberg requested an interview with him for a few minutes.

The prince entered the Comtesse's room and found that lady in an agony of distress, walking up and down and wringing her hands. As soon as she was aware of Prince Bernard's presence, she stood as though rooted to the spot, and unable to meet his gaze; then, covering her face with her hands and bursting into tears, she threw herself on the sofa.

The prince stood, pale and still, like a statue; and, feeling convinced that something crushing must follow all these signs of emotion, he said, gently :

‘ Marie, you wished to speak with me ?’

‘ Oh, Bernard!’ said the sobbing woman, ‘ you and I have known and loved each other for so many years—and that it should have come to this—to this !’

‘ To *what*, madame ?’ inquired the prince, sternly ; then he added, more tenderly : ‘ Marie, calme-toi. Nous, nous aimons toujours, n’est ce pas ? ainsi,—dis-moi tout ?’

‘ Listen, Bernard ! You know my history. Nothing was hidden from you ; you know how dearly I loved you—ah ! God only knows that, but He would not let *that* be ! So I married another—a good, just man, who I respected. I told

him the truth—that my heart had gone out to you years before ; but, just because he knew this, and trusted me, I was all the more anxious to give him all wifely devotion and respect ! Well,—he was full of pride of race, and I, alas ! had no child, so he collected all the remembrances of his ancestors, and made them what they are now—the wonder and admiration of France ; and although, in his great love for me, he left them to me for my life, I only hold them as a sacred trust, which at my death is to be delivered intact to Charles de Bonneval. Bernard, I have hoarded these treasures for my husband's sake, and felt them to be—as I say—sacred things ; but, believe

me, had I known, or even suspected, what would happen concerning them, I would have burned them all—if by doing so I could have saved—saved——’

She hesitated, seemingly too distressed to finish the sentence.

The prince stood by her, still calm, but looking perplexed.

‘ Well—well, Marie ?’ he said.

She proceeded :

‘ Bernard, my husband’s cousin, Charles de Bonneval, chanced to come here the very day of the—the robbery, and, oh ! Bernard, he is a born lawyer ! All head—no heart !—no tenderness,—no pity ! He insisted that all means should be taken to discover the historical gems.’

‘I thought,’ said the prince, ‘that they *had* been discovered—that they were in Paris?’

‘Charles said so,’ answered the Comtesse, bitterly; ‘and made me think so also, and only this day, half-an-hour ago,—but he lied,—did he tell me the means he had taken (the base means, I call them) of discovering the—the——’

‘Well, Marie, why do you hesitate? *The thief*, I suppose you would have said! But what has this to do with *me*?’

‘Well, Bernard, they say the thief *must* be in the house, and the jewels also; for Charles has had every person that has come in, or gone out of the Château, watched—followed; no parcels, no boxes

have been permitted to leave the house. And—oh, Bernard,—believe me,—I was innocent of the scandal Charles de Bonneval has brought upon us ! He did not rest till he obtained two detectives,—and they arrived,—and I innocently received them as—the Baron de Lerida and his Portuguese servant !’

Here the prince started as though he had been stung, while the Comtesse continued :

‘ The servant, Pedro,—supposed to be an illiterate Portuguese, dined and lived with the servants,—taking account of all he heard and saw ; while the other—the baron—— Oh ! Bernard, I cannot, cannot say it !’

The prince looked hopelessly mystified.

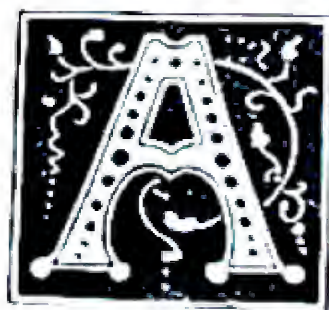
‘ But, Marie, who do they suspect? Why have you sent for *me*? Ah! is it Dorinda’s maid, Estelle?’





CHAPTER II.

“I am a gentleman,” I’ll be sworn thou art :
 Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions and spirit
 Do give thee five-fold blazon.’



At that moment, much to the Comtesse’s perturbation and distress, Dorinda walked majestically into the room. She looked pale, wild, but she said, defiantly :

‘What is all this fuss about? I thought the jewels were found! Estelle tells me the thief has been discov-

ered, and that' (looking witheringly at the shrinking Comtesse) 'our hostess has set detectives to watch—both below and above stairs! A curious phase of hospitality—truly!'

She spoke mockingly—scathingly, but with a look of horror—of terror in her eyes. Suddenly there was an authoritative knock at the door, and the *pseudo* baron and his servant (the latter now without his beard, and displaying openly the well-known features of Auguste Laménotte) entered the room, and informed the unhappy Comtesse that as Monsieur de Bonneval had put the case into the hands of the Law, a general search must be made, equally amongst

visitors' and servants' boxes; so they begged that all keys of all the inmates of the Château might be given up at once.

Dorinda was the first to speak. With ineffable contempt, she answered haughtily that 'her maid kept her keys, and they had better apply to her for them.'

'We have already done so,' respectfully answered Laménotte, 'and she has given us all,—except one,—that of the princess's jewel-case.'

'And that,' answered Dorinda, flushing up furiously, 'I refuse to give! No one opens my private box but myself.'

The prince, however, seeing the exigencies of the case, spoke out decidedly.

‘ You do not understand, Dorinda ; you *must* give up the key. Give it to me, dear, I will open the box for them !’

The princess stared helplessly at her husband, and left the room with him, followed closely by Laménotte. On arriving at the door of her own apartment she passionately refused to allow the detective to enter, but he insisted—upon which she began to weep, and implored her husband not to allow such an indignity.

‘ My dear wife,’ he reasoned, ‘ it is the law ; you are not alone called upon to prove your innocence,—every other soul in the Château is subjected to the same annoyance !’

‘ Then I refuse !’ she childishly reiterated. ‘ I will not submit to such an insult !’

The prince became annoyed, and with an expression on his face that Dorinda had once or twice seen before, and which she trembled to see to-day, he said, angrily :

‘The key, madame,—the key!’

‘Key of *what?*’ cried Dorinda, weakly and irritably.

‘The key of the jewel-case, Madame la Princesse,’ said Laménotte, coldly; ‘and, *pardon*, but I can waste no more time; if the key is not to be found, the case must be forced open!’

‘Bernard!’ cried the wretched woman, ‘can’t you trust me? The enamels are not there!’ and, forgetting herself in her agony of fear, she turned to Laménotte and said :

‘*Auguste, help me!*’

The prince looked thunderstruck!

‘Who is this “Auguste”?’ he said, fairly losing all patience. ‘There is some secret I have not fathomed; I never heard of this man before, and yet—you faint when you see him first, you call him by name, you——’

‘I will wait no longer, madame,’ said Laménotte, ‘the prince must know all.’

Casting herself on her husband’s breast, Dorinda said,

‘Husband!’

But Laménotte’s words had torn the veil of doubt from the husband’s eyes, and, starting back, he said, hoarsely,

‘Keep off, madame! Nothing but

honour rests on a breast covered with scars and medals! The key, madame,—the key!

‘Take it, then!’ said Dorinda, with an evil look in her eyes, and throwing it on the table; but, as the prince seized it, once more she put her hand on his. ‘For the last time,’ she said, excitedly, ‘as you value your peace of mind,—my happiness—let me open the box first! There are letters—secrets there, which you would be too much of a gentleman—too loyal a man—to pry into, for—they are not all mine!’

With an impatient jerk, he released his hand from hers, and, opening the gold and velvet casket (one of his first

gifts to her), he raised a silken cover, then—he uttered a cry, as if shot through the heart! For, laid on the top was a letter, in his wife's writing, addressed to 'Sir Guy Deverell.' By its side lay a packet of other letters, in a man's hand, some of which, he saw, began, 'My own sweet Dorinda!' 'My own!' 'My Princess! of Love!' Contemptuously he tossed them over once, to see the signatures; and 'Your own Guy,' 'Your true love Guy,' &c., completed the discovery!—He turned to look at his wife, but like Guinivère, she lay prone upon the ground, hiding her face with her hands.

Auguste, who had been a forgotten but deeply interested witness of the scene,

now came forward, and, lifting the tray of the jewel-box for further inspection, —beheld what he searched for!

‘Ah! voilà mon affaire!’ he said; and, heeding not the unhappy husband’s agony at this fresh disclosure, he carefully selected the enamels from the other jewels, and, quitting the room, left husband and wife together.

The prince once more looked at his prostrate wife, then throwing the letters towards her, and dashing the casket on the ground,—leaving the costly fragments and the glittering jewels scattered over the floor in all directions,—he said,

‘Take your “true love’s” letters, madame. I scorn to touch them! Hence-

forth you and I are strangers. I will never see you more !'

Striding from the room, he was gone from her sight, and she still lay upon the ground, where she was found some time after, and lifted tenderly by her maid, Estelle, whose heart felt heavy and sore for her mistress ; for she had heard all, and dreaded the future which she knew must be in store for the princess, — and perhaps for herself also !

As soon as the prince left his wife's room, he called for Auguste Laménotte, and had a long conversation with him. What he heard never transpired ; but we may be certain the *coiffeur* did not spare the woman who had scorned him, and

that he ruthlessly exposed to the shame-stricken and unhappy husband the story of her evil girlhood.

The prince, after the interview, retired to his own apartments, where he wrote two letters ; one to the Comtesse, confessing his wife's guilt, and saying a few bitter words concerning his own agony of shame ; then, in the presence of the detectives, he placed the enamels in a small box, which he sealed, and carried himself into the Comtesse's *boudoir*, where he found her still sobbing on the sofa. As he approached her, she threw herself at his feet, and, clasping his knees, would have spoken words of comfort, but he held up his shaking hand, as if imploring silence ; and, raising her gently, kissed

her furrowed cheek—and left the room.

Then, after deep thought, and a long consultation with Monsieur de Bonneval, he wrote another letter.

In about two hours' time Dorinda heard a carriage roll up to the principal entrance, and drive away. Estelle then brought her in a letter; she took it eagerly from her hand,—it was from the prince, and ran as follows:

‘DORINDA,

‘Your whole history is known to me, and I will never willingly see you again. I shall, however, treat you with mercy, as well as justice. You have nothing to fear from the Law;

for, through the Comtesse d'Alembert's kindness, and out of respect for the honour of my name, she and I have managed to keep the disgrace secret (the agony of possessing such a secret, a character like yours can in no way fathom). Neither have you anything to fear from me—*under certain conditions*, which are as follows. (I am on my way to my lawyer now.)

‘You will live in certain apartments in my hôtel at Paris, with a lady-companion of my choosing; through whom, *only*, all orders are to be given. No orders will be taken from anyone but her, and I tell you this *emphatically*, to guard you from exposing your-

self to the humiliation of being disobeyed by your own dependants. You will have your own medical man to watch you every day.

‘ You may retain your maid Estelle—at present. To silence scandal, I shall reside, when it pleases me, under the same roof; but I repeat, *I will never see, nor will I ever hold communication with you*; and if you force yourself upon me, or annoy me with any letters, I will shelter you no longer. As long as you live a reputable life, you may remain under my protection, and you will have money enough, (a fixed allowance), and the means of leading a good and charitable life. You will have your own carriages,

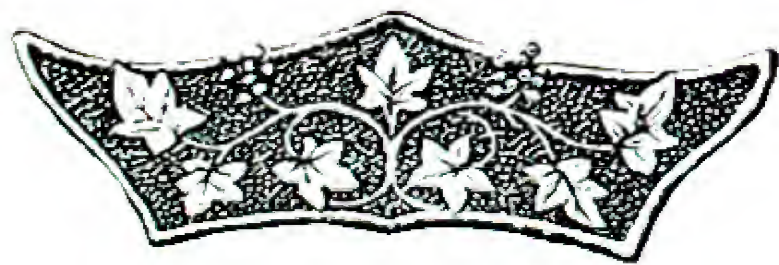
but you are never to leave the house alone; for, from what I hear of your antecedents, I believe you are the victim of a mania—kleptomania; and I am determined to prevent your again disgracing me by being guilty of what, in a princess, is called “mania,” but which in a beggar would be *felony*. This mania I could have pitied and forgiven, but your deceit concerning a man who I treated with leniency for your reputation’s sake, I cannot consider a mania,—so *that* I never will forgive.

‘BERNARD, PRINCE DE LA STYRIE.’

Dorinda read the letter over and over again, and her mind was in such a whirl

that she could not make it up as to whether she felt relieved or sorry. What would her life be like? Should she have all the advantages she had before enjoyed, without the drawback of being bound to the giver of them? That she should not dislike.

‘But—psha!’ she thought, ‘he will soon get tired of it, and will be reconciled to me!’

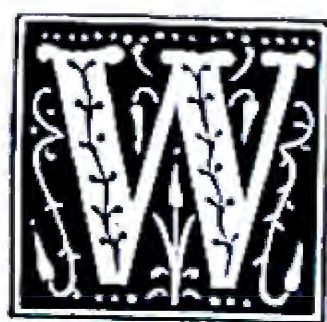




CHAPTER III.

‘Thus can the demi-god Authority
Make us pay down for our offence by weight.’

‘Give me not counsel,
Nor let no comforter delight mine ear.’



WHILE she was cogitating over the letter, Estelle re-appeared, saying that Monsieur le Prince had desired that the princess should be ready to start in a few hours hence, so she (Estelle) must prepare; and, as the maid proceeded to pick up the letters and jewels which were still scattered about, Dorinda

sat moodily watching her, trying to realize her position.

‘In a way,’ she thought to herself, ‘this catastrophe is almost a relief,—for I have now nothing to dread—nothing to hide!’

For years, she argued to herself, she had not known security, and the tension had become so great at times, that she had been tempted to——; but, anyhow, the blow that had now fallen, was not one-hundredth part as crushing as the calamity at Broke Abbey! Oh, no! for then she had loved and lost all; whereas now she had done neither! (For that she did not love her husband,—well!—that went without saying!) and, for as long

as she chose, she would have a home of her own,—and a luxurious one ! And yet—yet she felt uneasy ! How should she bear the loss of perfect freedom ? And here she returned to the former question,—‘ What will my life be like ? and if I am unhappy—where ?—to whom should I go ? ’

She shuddered,—but again ‘ pulling herself together ’ she murmured, ‘ Lorsque l’on n’a pas ce qu’on aime,—il faut aimer ce qu’on a. ’

Again Estelle spoke :

‘ I am desired, madame, to beg you not to leave this apartment till you do so for good. The prince thought it would be pleasanter for all parties,—Monsieur le Prince—himself—*est parti !* ’

Dorinda made no answer, but continued watching Estelle as she nimbly moved hither and thither. She remarked, too, that the maid had red eyes—she had been crying! Dorinda felt touched, and, for almost the first time in her life, she experienced a craving for the sympathy of one beneath her in station.

‘Estelle,’ she said.

‘Madame?’

‘Estelle, have you any sisters?’

‘No, madame!’

‘Should you care much for one?’

Estelle looked round at her mistress in surprise, and noticing the unwonted expression of pathos in her eyes,—with supreme tact, said simply:

‘ Je n’aime que vous, madame—pas besoin de sœurs !’

Dorinda said no more, nor did the maid, but those few words made a bond between them which was never broken.

After some hours of tedious waiting,—during which refreshment was offered to, and petulantly refused by Dorinda, (who felt fairly cowed, and dared not leave her room—against the prince’s express orders)—she heard a carriage driving up, and, looking out, saw it was her own ; so, dressing leisurely, she descended the stairs with her accustomed dignity, expecting the Comtesse to meet her in the hall, to bid her *bon voyage* ; but, save the domestics, who crowded as usual to the door, no one was

to be seen. The Comtesse was conspicuous by her absence.

A gentleman,—a stranger,—however, presented himself, hat in hand, and, bowing profoundly, would have helped the princess into the carriage; but, boiling with indignation at the Comtesse's neglect, she rejected his assistance, and proudly mounted the steps alone.

Before she could see or prevent it, the strange gentleman (to her enormous indignation) also entered the carriage,—and sat himself opposite to her!

‘Sir!’ exclaimed the princess, arrogantly, ‘may I ask to whom—to what I am indebted for your presence—here, in my own carriage?’ and, pulling the check-

string, she said to the footman, who seemed in the very extremity of terror, ‘Open the door and let this—person out. I never travel with strangers!’

To her astonishment, however, the gentleman gave a sign to the footman, and they started a second time.

‘Sir!’ again said the princess, ‘who are you? How dare you invade my privacy!’

‘Madame, I implore you to be patient and hear me! I have the prince’s orders to attend you!’ bringing out a letter, which Dorinda snatched from his hand; but, recognising the prince’s writing, she dared say no more.

The letter was as follows :

‘ MONSIEUR ACHILLE,

‘ I appoint you the princess’s family doctor and attendant. You will start at once and kindly travel with her now and attend her medically whenever she requires it. It is my wish you should live in my house and see her every day, and report to me concerning her health every now and then. The princess will not start on her journey to Paris, till you arrive to escort her.

‘ B., PRINCE DE STYRIE.’

‘ In fact, monsieur,’ exclaimed Dorinda, excitedly, ‘ you are to be a spy upon my actions, and I am, at present, your prisoner !’

‘Nay, Madame la Princesse, I would be your friend,—or,’ (seeing a gesture of proud disdain) ‘anything you wish me to be ; but I have my orders, and must obey them.’

‘Sir, I am an Englishwoman, and not to be coerced——’

‘Madame, will you listen patiently ? and as I deal with you may God deal with me. I will tell you exactly my position as regards you ; and I trust, much as you may dislike me at present, you may hereafter find me useful, rather than an infliction. The prince has known me for many years, and he wishes me to explain (once for all, and I shall never refer to it again) that you have brought much sorrow and shame upon him, and he would lessen

the disgrace in the eyes of the world for his family's sake,—and for your own—' Achille stopped for a moment, to see if Dorinda would reply, or try to exonerate herself, but she remained sulkily silent,—
'so he has spread the report that you are the victim of a mania, and that I am to be the means of your cure. You see, madame, a mania is no shame—a theft is ; and, if you will bear patiently the restrictions laid upon you——'

'For how long?' broke in Dorinda.

'Well, for a year or two ; then the prince may make other arrangements ; but I warn you the prince has the law on his side, and any infringement of his wishes may cause a stricter *surveillance*.'

‘In fact,’ said Dorinda, bitterly, ‘I am to consider myself a prisoner, and the world is to look upon me as a madwoman—for the honour and glory of the prince’s family!’

‘Well—but surely, princess, you will excuse my freedom if I remind you that it is for your name’s sake also. Would you rather be bad or mad?’

‘Bad!’ said Dorinda, crossly and unhesitatingly.

‘Some people are both bad and mad,’ said Monsieur Achille, sadly; and Dorinda, being unable to challenge the remark, sank back in the corner of the carriage and closed her eyes to consider the matter over.

‘This man may be of use to me, so I must try to “get over” him,’ she thought. ‘I will pretend to sleep, and have a good look at him.’ So for the space of about twenty minutes she watched him carefully.

Monsieur Achille, whose appearance was by no means lovely, had taken a book, and was reading attentively. He was past the middle-age, short, and rather fat. His features were indescribably common-place; the sort of features it is impossible to recall in absence. His head was bald, but with a grizzly fringe round it. One wisp of hair on the right side of the head was allowed to grow inordinately long, and was brought over to the left side, and

spread out carefully with a soft brush (as one spreads 'parlour paste') across the top, in the wild hope of covering its nakedness.

At times, either from adverse winds, or in removing the hat, or from other untoward circumstances, the wisp would get displaced,—would stick out at the side or back of the head like the handle of a jug, or it would at times fall in a long stringy curl down the back! this latter contingency was apt to make common-place people shudder, and even affected their appetites.

The doctor's face and chin were covered with a short, iron-grey stubble, which crackled like dead leaves when he passed

his hand over them ; but the eyes were the features which most impressed Dorinda. They were light-blue, and very watery ; and it was an impossibility ever to be sure at whom, or at what, Monsieur Achille was looking ; for, when he turned his gaze upon, or away, from any object, one eye always lagged behind its fellow, leaving too large a space between them. Presumably, after years of obstinacy on one side, of impatience on the other, and of much weeping upon both, these optics had agreed to differ, (like sensible individuals forced to lead their lives side-by-side,) and had consequently settled down contentedly in the furthest corner from one another.

Thus, when anyone sat by Monsieur

Achille's side, as the princess (unwillingly) did at this moment, they would find his glassy stare apparently fixed upon them sideways, after an unpleasantly furtive fashion ; indeed, that position was the only one in which one would be prepared to swear he was watching one's every motion,—whereas that was the only moment at which he was not doing so.

This obliquity, or eccentricity, of vision, however, frequently stood Achille in good stead ; for individuals under his charge always thought he was looking at them when he was not ; and that he was not, when he was.

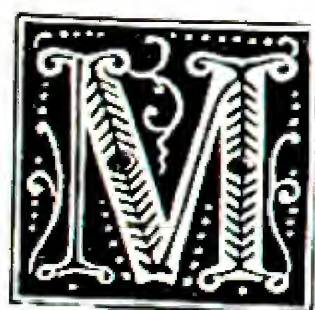


CHAPTER IV.

‘ Men

Call counsel, and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel.’

‘ By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is a-weary of this great world.’



MONSIEUR ACHILLE was a perfect gentleman in mind, if not in appearance, and he was generally shrewd in his business (which was principally with the insane); so he guessed at once that the prince's object was to make his wife out madder than she

really was—for his own honour's sake ; but Achille was—a man, as well as a ‘ mad-doctor,’ and a tender-hearted, impressionable one, and Dorinda soon perceived that he had been struck by her beauty, and that the sentiment ‘ akin to Love ’ was already strong in his breast concerning her ; thus she found it no difficult task to ‘ get over ’ him, and make him believe her more to be trusted than she really was. He knew not her earliest antecedents, nor that from her youth up she had led such an exciting life of reckless lying—feverish suspense, and fear of discovery ;—was the victim of such a constantly uneasy feeling of cunning suspiciousness of those around her, that these

poisonous seeds,—begotten by an original and never-resisted taint of evil, had taken firm root,—had budded and blossomed into all but—if not quite—insanity, accompanied by a total loss of discernment between good and evil, rectitude and expediency.

Oh ! if parents *would* but realize that wickedness—ay, and madness also, in many cases, might in first youth—and if combated by true religion and loving tact, be successfully checked—reined in, instead of developing, as they otherwise must, into a possession of the Devil !

Monsieur Achille treated the princess with the utmost deference, never addressing her unless she began the conversa-

tion. Once he offered her refreshment and wine, which he had brought purposely, and, thinking she looked fatigued, —depressed, he rather pressed her to partake of them ; but he was inexpressibly annoyed when, in answer to his persuasions, she burst into a fit of hysterical weeping, asking him, reproachfully,

‘ Had he orders to poison her ? ’

Achille made no answer to this taunt, except he crushed his dead leaves excitedly, and continued reading.

They now entered the station ;—the footman and Estelle superintended the luggage, but Monsieur Achille never left the princess’s side, until, as they were waiting to start, Dorinda begged a book might be

bought for her; so, after comfortably settling her in the compartment, Achille had the door locked, and left her to comply with her wishes,—the bookstall being exactly opposite, and within sight of the carriage.

‘I will now see what he is made of!’ thought Dorinda.

When Achille returned with the book, the princess was nowhere to be seen! Her fur cloak and shawls had been thrown on the ground—and her seat was empty! Achille looked in,—unlocked the door of the compartment, and sat down;—then, coolly proceeding to divest himself of his hat, he drew out and donned a cap,—while the train moved slowly out of the station! As

soon as they were clear of the town, Monsieur Achille took out a book, and, after reading attentively for quite half-an-hour, he said, calmly :

‘ If Madame la Princesse has rested sufficiently, perhaps she will allow her humble servant to help her back into her seat !’

Awkward and crestfallen, Dorinda rose up from under her fur cloak, whither she had hidden herself, and said, crossly,

‘ Why, you were not even frightened, Monsieur Achille ! Take care ! A woman’s wit may bring you to grief next time !’

‘ Madame,’ Achille answered, with dignity, ‘ when I trust to your honour,—which I did, when I left you, at your request, to buy you a book,—if *it* fails,

you only injure yourself! I am anxious to befriend, as well as to guard you ; if I do not succeed, I fear you will find less sympathising hands ready to receive you.'

'Monsieur, is it gentlemanlike,—or loyal, to deal with a woman (and an unhappy one) by mysterious threats? What do you mean by "less sympathising hands ready to receive you"?'

'Madame,' said Achille, uneasily, 'I would not deal with threats, I hate harshness to a woman ; what I say is for your good.'

'Explain yourself.'

'The prince, madame, is a stern man, and a soldier ; he exacts obedience from—'

'His prisoners!' said the princess, quickly.

Achille bowed assent.

‘ *I am not a soldier, madame, and I would deal tenderly with you ; but I must warn you of your danger.*’

‘ *Encore des mystères !*’

‘ *Madame,—plainly, then : unless you lead your life quietly and with dignity, another home will be provided for you !*’

Something in the doctor’s tone alarmed Dorinda,—a dread she dared not name came over her.

‘ *Monsieur Achille ! What do you mean ?*’

‘ *Princess, can you not guess ? Tiens ! I have been plain and open to you from the beginning, and I will be so still ;—I mean this : that if I fail with you, if you subject your husband to annoyance or uneasiness, you will be placed where—where*

—you will be safe,—near a convent——’

‘ In a mad-house, do you mean? Oh! Achille, not in a mad-house! For the Almighty’s sake, save me from that—from a living death! Oh, Achille, I know I have teased and provoked you, but you *are* kind, and remember how young I am! My life, since my marriage, has been very *triste*—very unsatisfying! True, I might have been a better woman, but—Achille, I repent! I will be patient and obedient! Only, for the sake of God’s sweet mercy, don’t—don’t shut me up!’

The poor woman threw herself at the doctor’s feet, and buried her face in his lap.

‘ Levez-vous, madame. On my honour, you are safe with me!—only be obedient,

be patient ! I will do my utmost for you !

‘ Oh, thank you for that, thank you ! I will indeed do what you tell me ; but, good God ! to be shut up—oh, I could not, could not bear it !’

‘ Hush, poor child ! how your head throbs—have you no eau-de-Cologne ?’

Dorinda took a bottle out of her pocket, saying, ‘ I have very little ;’ and, pouring it all out on her handkerchief, she sat down, exhausted, and bathed her burning forehead.

‘ Take some refreshment,’ the old man said, tenderly ; ‘ *tenez*, I have some sherry or brandy in my medicine-chest, and will give you some.’

Going into the next compartment he

brought out a case which he opened.

‘What large bottles!’ said Dorinda.

‘What do they hold?’

‘Brandy, sherry, laudanum, and chloroform.’

‘I would like a little sherry,’ said Dorinda, ‘and have you a biscuit—and there is no glass!’

‘I will fetch them in a moment,’ said the little man, and vanished into the next compartment.

Quick as thought, Dorinda seized the laudanum bottle, and poured a large quantity into her eau-de-Cologne flask; then, screwing the jewelled top firmly down, pocketed it before the old doctor could find his biscuit and glasses.

‘Now,’ said Dorinda to herself, with a pale, determined face, and clenched teeth, ‘I am safe, at all events, from a mad-house!’

When the doctor returned, Dorinda was sitting in her own seat with her temples bound with her handkerchief, and, after he had handed her the refreshments, she called out hastily :

‘Oh, Monsieur Achille, one of your bottles has upset—your coat caught it!’

He turned quickly, and saw the bottle containing laudanum pouring its contents on the ground. He caught it quickly, and, holding it up to the light, said,

‘Good gracious, I have lost enough to poison a regiment of soldiers!’

Dorinda seemed to take little interest in his annoyance, and he locked the box.

‘Is there not a saying about locking the stable after the horse has been stolen?’ said Dorinda, languidly. ‘I should think, too, that they will fine you for staining their cushions.’

They were now nearing Paris, and Dorinda turned to Monsieur Achille, and said,

‘You *will* be my friend, will you not? and try, try to soften my husband—and oh! for God’s sake, don’t let him send me away!’

‘I will not.’

‘You swear it?’

‘I swear it.’

‘Unless I become mad?’

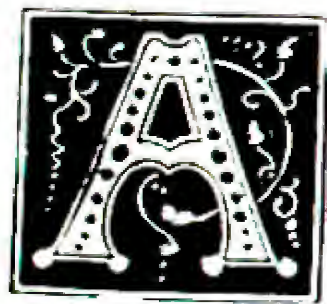
‘Unless—you become—unmanageable.’

The train now stopped. They had arrived. A carriage met them, into which got the princess, Achille, and Estelle, and they drove quickly to the Hôtel de la Styrie. How gloomy it looked! It was an old-fashioned house, *entre cour et jardin*, and, when Dorinda heard the great house-door clang behind her, she felt as if her life were left outside, and that her death had begun,—a sort of dead existence, of which the atmosphere and surroundings were stifling, and as black as hell!



CHAPTER V.

'O, it is excellent
To have a giant's strength ! but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant !'



AS the princess entered the hall, she was met by the old house-keeper, who had been forty years with the prince and his mother, and who had received her a few years previously as a bride ; but she had never taken the trouble to try to attach the old lady to herself.

‘Bon jour, Madame St. Rémy!’

‘Je vous salue, Madame la Princesse.’

Then the old lady said, shyly :

‘The prince being away, has desired me to show you your apartments, Madame la Princesse!’

‘Do I not occupy my own?’

‘They are not prepared for your reception, madame.’

Dorinda said no more ; but, feeling dispirited and wretched, she asked half-weeping for Monsieur Achille’s arm, and followed her conductress. The rooms were beautiful and all *en suite*, but had never been occupied during Dorinda’s married life ; and how different the spirit that seemed to pervade them, from that which had blessed her own !

Then—in the rooms she had entered as a bride, every article bore the stamp of her husband's love! The curtains and carpets were all her own favourite colour, while nick-nacks and *surprises* were strewn everywhere! and how little she had valued them!

These rooms were grand and cold, and what the Germans call *unfreundlich*. They were hung with satin and tapestry, and family portraits ornamented the walls. One of these represented Prince Bernard's mother—a proud-looking dame in powder and patches, and wearing on her arm the identical bracelet which Dorinda's husband had presented her with at her betrothal. By this lady's side was an-

other picture—of Bernard's father,—and a space had been left, within an empty frame, for Dorinda's own portrait; but that frame, she remarked, had disappeared, and a picture of an old man—Bernard's grandfather—was in its place.

All these family portraits (Dorinda thought) seemed to gaze upon her in cold disapproval and cruel silence.

‘But what a fool I am!’ she said, inwardly; ‘how terrified I should be if they did aught but stare!’

As she stood looking around her, a strange, dazed feeling came over her, as if the whole thing were a dream; she felt faint—giddy, but kind old Achille touched her arm.

‘I think, madame, you are tired, and had better retire to your apartment.’

Dorinda smiled, and thanked him;—the old housekeeper vanished,—and in her stead a middle-aged lady of smiling aspect stood by her; Dorinda was half inclined to think she must be some spirit, so noiselessly had she made her entrance.

‘She can’t be one of the ancestresses come down from her frame,’ thought Dorinda; ‘she is too modern-looking, too commonplace.’

The lady bowed.

‘Madame la Princesse,’ she said, ‘the prince has desired me to introduce myself to you.’

Dorinda collected herself at once, flushed up, and bowed stiffly, saying nothing.

The lady continued :

‘The prince has appointed me about you, madame—as——’

‘Keeper!’ said Dorinda, coldly; ‘and may I ask your name?’

‘Dubois,’ answered the lady.

‘Then—Madame Dubois—may I ask you to do your duty without speaking to me more than you can help?’

‘Indeed, princess,’ answered Madame Dubois, with heightened colour, ‘my occupation is naturally a difficult and unpleasant one, and I fain would cause you no annoyance.’

‘If such really be your wish,’ returned the princess, haughtily, ‘I beg you will perform your duties as much—at a distance from me as possible—and that—we may see as little of each other—as convenient. And now, which is my bedroom? I wish to be alone. Pray call my maid.’

Madame Dubois smiled no more, but, ringing the bell, desired that Estelle should be sent for.

‘And now, show me my room.’

‘It is next door to this, Madame la Princesse,’ said Madame Dubois, indicating the *portière* by which she had entered.

‘Shall I lead the way?’

Dorinda followed her.

The bed-room was magnificent, but dismal; a large four-post bed, with heavy velvet curtains, massive furniture, old china, and pictures *ad nauseam*.

‘Portraits—portraits,’ whispered Dorinda, ‘fixing one with their eyes everywhere;—and not a kind face amongst them! They all look as if they had murdered their grandmothers, and are only waiting for me to do the same! Ah! I sha’n’t murder—my grandmother!’

‘Did you speak, madame?’ from Madame Dubois.

‘No, I did not,’ from Dorinda. ‘I hope the next room to mine belongs to Estelle?’

‘It does, madame,’ answered Madame Dubois.

‘And the other room—the other side?
Whose room is that?’

‘Mine, madame.’

‘A donkey between two panniers,’ said Dorinda, shortly,—then, seeing that Madame Dubois did not understand the allusion, and thought that she had been called a donkey, and was looking proportionately pleased, Dorinda deigned to explain. ‘I’m the donkey.’

‘Oh!’ said Madame Dubois, somewhat relieved; and, seeing Estelle approaching, she left the princess, muttering to herself, ‘As mad as a March hare!’

‘The “cap fitted” about the donkey,’ thought Dorinda; but as soon as she saw Estelle’s kind (and now beloved) face she ran to meet her.

‘Oh, Estelle! Estelle! Je n’ai que toi!’

‘Chut! madame,’ said Estelle. ‘Ne parlez-pas trop-haut.’

‘Pourquoi?’

‘Il n’y à pas de portes.’

‘No doors! no doors!’ cried Dorinda, sinking on a chair, ‘and am I at the mercy of strangers? Shall I never be alone? am I to be everlastingly watched?’

‘Never mind, madame,’ said Estelle. ‘We must always speak English. I hear Madame Dubois does not understand it!’

‘Don’t trust to that, Estelle! Oh, Estelle!’ continued Dorinda, excitedly, ‘do you love me?’ (weeping).

‘I do, madame! and, *bon Dieu!* how I grieve for you!’

‘Listen, Estelle! If you believe in God, be my friend; I am not mad—am I? but they will drive me so! No doors! but, Estelle! you and I are clever enough to cheat them all! Oh, be true to me!’

‘I swear it, madame!’

‘Now, Estelle, we must pretend not to like each other! Dubois must believe in you! old Achille, I know, will love me—if he does not already.’

‘Madame, be patient, and make Dubois love you too! Did the journey tire you, madame?’

Dorinda was afraid of telling Estelle anything that had occurred in the carriage, for

fear of being overheard ;—and about the one dread secret,—of the deadly weapon she would always have at hand,—she would not tell even to Estelle.

‘Estelle—will you go and find Monsieur Achille, and ask him to come to see me?’

‘I will, madame;’ and Estelle left the room.

Dorinda instantly dived into her dressing-bag, and getting a small leather box hastily took the bottle full of laudanum out of her pocket, put it in the case, locked it, and jumping lightly on to a chair hid it on a ledge behind one of the portraits.

‘Voilà!’ she said, kissing her hand at the

grim old woman, who looked at her from within the frame, 'if you are very good, and take care of that for me, you will see some fun with it some day ! and if—' she added, revengefully—' if you will come down, out of your frame—afterwards, and haunt *his* pillow who drives me to this,—well,—I will love you, and—(if I can,) pray you out of the pains of that Purgatory which, to judge from your personal appearance, you richly deserve !'

Achille now came in, and Dorinda flew to him and said, tearfully :

' Monsieur Achille, there are no doors !'

' Ah !'

' I can't sleep if I think Dubois comes and glowers at me through the curtains.'

‘What can I do?’

‘Dear Monsieur Achille, get me a large screen round my bed ; *do !*’

‘I will try.’

‘Will you come and see me every day?’

‘I will.’

‘Twice a day?’

‘Trois fois si cela vous plait, j’y suis toujours.’

‘And oh ! be my friend?’

‘Je vous le jure.’

‘Bon-soir!’

‘Bonne-nuit!’ and Achille’s eyes were more watery than ever, as he turned and left her.

Weeks, months passed, and Dorinda tried to bear everything patiently,—even de-

fiantly,—but Estelle saw and felt that her spirit was breaking ! for the knowledge that *an eye* was ever watching her—that she could not escape it—even when she wept, chafed, irritated, and finally unnerved her.

For long she hoped against hope that the prince would relax his severity, and relent, but she heard nothing of, or from him. Day after day she drove out, accompanied by Dubois. If she wished to make a purchase,—Dubois made it, and always got the wrong thing. If she left her sitting-room,—Dubois followed her, asking, ‘did she want anything?’ If she looked into the ante-room,—the old porter, who sat there all day reading a paper, jumped up, instantly on the *qui vive* !

By a twist of her wrist, Dubois could turn a fold of the *portière*, and take in her unhappy charge and her occupation at a glance; and if the princess even walked in the garden, she was forced to put up with the same detestable companion! Estelle was her only comfort, for she sympathised heartily in her hatred for Dubois,—(although she had the cleverness to hide it)—seeing that all her mistress's sorrows, frequent tears, and her miserable position, failed to touch the 'lady companion's heart!'

'Alas! Estelle,' Dorinda would say, 'she is Dubois by name and *du bois* by nature; that is to say, if I ever were vulgar enough to make a pun!'

Achille had, as Dorinda foretold, learnt

to love her too much ! He was her slave ; and as, when he was with the princess, Dubois considered she might absent herself and leave her charge to his care, Dorinda used to look forward to his coming with delight. She could then be natural and unrestrained, and she would sit by him on the sofa, and cry like a child on his shoulder. She was ever gentle and submissive to him, and his very presence was a comfort and the only pleasure in her unhappy life !

‘Achille,’ she would say, ‘I can stand it no longer ; can I not go home to England ?’

‘*Mon enfant*, have you a home there ?’

And Dorinda had to confess she had

none ! Her father had drunk himself to death, her mother had married again,—a young clerk,—and they had emigrated to Australia ; besides, her mother's house would have been no shelter—no home to her,—it never had been ! Then she would think of the duke and of Brandon Castle—but how could she apply to *him* again ? Besides,—she was a French subject now ! No ! no ! She must stay and die where she was ! and then . . . she would, in her despair, look up at the grim old woman's face in the picture, and fancy she smiled at her,—and that she could almost hear her whisper, ‘ Patience ! —for a little longer—soon—soon ! ’

One day Dorinda said to Achille,

‘Do you think the prince would refuse, were I to ask him to let me have my old friend, Lady Olive Ramsay, on a visit—for a week? Even if he would not let her stay in this house, she could live in a hotel, and be with me during the day. He used to like Olive.’

Achille thought a moment.

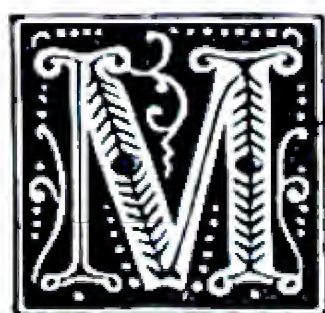
‘I will ask,’ he said; ‘the prince surely cannot refuse.’





CHAPTER VI.

‘I remember, I remember
The house where I was born.’



AMMA, how hot it is! I can
scarcely breathe.’

‘And yet, Iona, we have all
the windows open, and the Venetian blinds
are down. Will you come into the gar-
den, dear?’

‘Oh, no, mother. Everyone can see one
out there! I shall get cooler presently.’

This short conversation took place between our old friends, Lady Olive Ramsay and Iona, who were sitting in a large room on the ground floor of one of the houses in Kensington Gardens,—the houses which look out upon the venerable old palace.

It was a hot summer's morning, but everything had been done to cool the room: doors all open, Venetian blinds down, and awnings protected the windows which opened down to the ground, upon a pretty garden, full of sweet flowers.

Lady Olive looked anxiously at poor Iona, who,—fragile in the extreme,—had just recovered from a dangerous illness, and was panting for breath.

‘Oh, mother!’ the girl said, piteously, ‘it is worse than useless thinking I can ever lead a London life—or go through a London season! I have not the strength. Oh! if we could only live in the country!’

‘Dearest! I long for the country too!’

‘Then let us go, mother—but where?’

‘Iona, I have a suggestion to make, if you are well enough to listen.’

‘Well, mother, what is it?’

‘I have been longing to tell you something for some time (but I did not wish to excite you); however, you are better to-day,—so listen. It is, as you say, an impossibility for you to lead a London life at

present; Dr. Wilson says so; and he advises the country. Well, my old home, Riverstairs, is vacant,—has been for the last month; and I have been secretly preparing it for our occupation—as a surprise when you should get well. Would you like to go there?’

‘Oh, mamma! how delightful! You have so often spoken to me of Riverstairs; besides, I remember it—as one remembers a dream! Are we really going there? How soon? You have always spoken of it as “Home.”’

‘Yes, Riverstairs has ever been my home! You see, it belonged to my mother, and I was born there. She left it to me; but for very sad reasons I had to let it. The

lease, however, has fallen in, and I should dearly like to live there again.'

'Let us go then at once, mother. It seems already like "Home" to me!'

'Well, there is always one spot upon earth, (I always think,) which is "Home" to one more than any other;—a sort of oasis in the desert of the world, even though (as in the present case) one may not have lived there for years. Nay! even supposing I were never to return to it,—that it had passed for ever into the hands of strangers,—Riverstairs would ever remain "Home" to me.'

'I think I understand that,' said Iona, thoughtfully, 'for may it not be that the first earthly home of our childhood—our

home at the time that our spirits were freshest from the hands of their Maker,—
—may be a type of the Heavenly one? and that as our spiritual natures are ever attracted to, and long for, their Heavenly Home, so the purer parts of our earthly natures long for the innocent home of their youthhood. Do describe Riverstairs, mother!’

‘Riverstairs,’ answered Lady Olive, ‘is so called from a flight of steps which run from the garden terrace, down to the pathway which lies between it and the Thames. It is an old William-and-Mary house, in yellow brick and white stone facings. It was covered with jessamine and the beautiful magnolia, and stands in

an old-fashioned garden, with quaintly-shaped flower-beds, full of sweet-smelling flowers,—flowers one rarely meets with now-a-days, for they are considered “old-fashioned ;” but I like old-fashioned flowers best ! Large hollyhocks of all colours abound at Riverstairs, and cling to every available wall ; and on the other side of the lawn is a thick shrubbery, composed chiefly of tall white rose-bushes, which were laden with the sweetest and whitest of roses ! So white were they, that, if one chanced to pass through the shrubbery at night, they seemed to light one on one’s way !

‘ And there are some old mulberry-trees too—are there not ?’

‘ Oh, yes! there is a second garden, which is arrived at by passing through a natural archway, formed by the interlaced branches of two curious old cedar-trees. In this second garden there were such beds of pinks and carnations! These latter grew in great bundles of all colours, their heads seeming to droop from very sweetness; and, Iona, to this day the smell of a carnation brings before me—sunshine,—green grass,—beauty,—youth,—River-stairs! For what power so subtle in conjuring up to one’s memory old scenes, absent voices, wild joys, or incidents in one’s far-off life,—which one had fancied (or perhaps hoped) were past and forgotten,—as that of a passing scent!’

‘Mother!’ said Iona, with conviction in her voice, ‘if I get into that garden, I shall soon be strong!’

‘I used to live in that garden,’ continued Lady Olive, ‘as a wee child; and I remember there was a white marble fountain in the midst of it, and, if I shut my eyes now, I can hear the plashings and murmurings of its waters as they played rather heartlessly (I used to think) with a ball given them for their amusement,—throwing it up a great height,—then catching it again, and dallying with it,—then letting it go with a splash, and for some time forgetting its very existence!—then *da capo!* also—in the centre of the lawn was a bed of heliotrope and scarlet ver-

bena, in the shape of a huge basket,—of gilt wirework, which sparkled in the sun. It had a broad handle (also in wirework) which sprang from each side of it, rising to between four or five feet from the ground ; and on the very top of this handle I would perch my small self, and, from my elevated position, watch the boats and barges as they passed up and down the river. I often cried over the poor, ill-fed, and generally ill-used horses, toiling along the towing-path, on the opposite (the Surrey) side of the river, as they dragged the heavy black barges (laden with coal) against the stream ; and, should a steamer pass by, I could, from where I sat, see its funnel lowered to pass beneath the

arches of Richmond Bridge, and I could hear the rushing and rustling sound close beneath me, as the waves, (raised by the steamboat's huge paddle-wheels,) washed the sides of the pathway, causing the high reeds to sway to and fro. How exercised, too, my little mind used to be concerning the great lazy bargeman, who invariably lay full-length across the barge, with a clay pipe in his mouth,—and also concerning the dirty woman, carrying the dirtier baby, at his side! Had they any home besides the black barge? were they happy?—and always dirty? &c., &c.; but later on I quite decided that all bargemen were *murderers!*

‘Murderers!—mother! How so?’

‘ I was lying in bed one summer’s night, —the windows were open, and it was very late,—when I was roused by a frightful scream, and the words, “ Murder ! murder ! —oh, my God ! ” rang through the stillness of the night. I ran into the nurse’s room, and found her standing at the window in her night-dress. The moonlight was streaming into the room, making the river look like molten silver, while the outline of something large and black was looming upon it, and passing quickly by the house ; then I heard—a heavy splash ! The nurse was calling excitedly to the gardener and the ferryman (I recognised their voices as they passed quickly by, talking to one another) ; but they took no notice

of her, and I heard them run hastily down the river stairs, and jump into a boat ;— I could hear the oars splash in the water, and bump into the rowlocks, and then—the men pulled quickly away. As the nurse turned from the window to go to bed again, she perceived, for the first time, the little trembling child standing at her side in its night-gown.

“Bless the child ! Lor’, Miss Olive, how you frightened me ! You naughty child ! Come to bed !”

“What’s the matter, nursesey ?” I asked, in an awe-stricken voice. “What were those screams ?”

“Nothing, dear ; only Mary, the ’ousemaid in the next room, has got the nightmare.”

“ ‘What! in bed with her!’ I persisted, vaguely, “and doesn’t she like it?”

‘Without further parleying, I was caught up and put to bed again, and, never having heard of the “nightmare” before, I concluded it was something that usually slept with the housemaid that I had never heard of, and that she and it had been playing with one another and quarrelled. So I went to bed and to sleep; but the next day I overheard the nurse say, “With her throat cut from ear to ear, and floating in the water,” and, listening attentively, I gathered that a man had murdered his wife, (the murderer being a bargeman,) and that the screams I had heard were the poor woman’s, and

not those of “the nightmare that slept with Mary.” Seeing, however, that I was meant not to hear the story, I kept my own counsel, and from that day judged bargemen with the harshest judgment.’

‘What a dreadful story! But tell me more about the place. Is Falcon’s Rest beautiful?’

‘Oh, yes! far more so than Riverstairs; but I love my Home best, for I have such an unpleasant recollection of Falcon’s Rest. Lord and Lady Glenalmond were so unkind to me! They wanted to take you from me, Iona, and bring you up themselves; because, by Scotch law, you will inherit Lady Glenalmond’s Highland property. But I *could* not let you go! and

•

I have, I fear, much spoilt your worldly prospects in consequence. But you will have plenty from me to make up for it! I would dearly love, however, to reconcile them to me.'

'But you won't let them take me from you, mother?'

'Not unless you wish it! Indeed, I don't know whether they would care about having you now; but, short of giving you to them, no efforts shall be wanting on my side to make them friendly. Ah, they were hard people!'



CHAPTER VII.

‘ No place like home !’



SOON after the above conversation, the necessary arrangements were made, and Lady Olive and Iona settled themselves at River-stairs. A curious effect was produced upon the latter directly she arrived, and as she looked at the river below the garden wall, and heard a certain clock

strike the quarters a short distance off, a feeling of bewilderment came over the delicate girl, like a sensation one experiences upon hearing a lovely strain of music, familiar—yet strange, and bringing unbidden tears to one's eyes.

‘ Oh, mother!’ she murmured, ‘ don’t you recollect the words of that song,

“ I remember, I remember
The house where I was born ”?

Oh, stay! Let me think—what *do* I remember?’ Casting her arms round her mother, and leaning her head on her shoulder, she whispered, ‘ I seem to see a chariot drive up to the house,—this house, and a tall lady in deep mourning, with a long crape veil nearly

concealing her slight figure, slowly enters the hall and ascends the broad stair-case, carrying a child ; she is singing softly to it in a soothing way, scarcely above her breath, and rocking it in her gentle arms,—she ascends higher and higher, always crooning her little song, enters a room above, and, laying the child tenderly on the bed, throws herself by its side,—and in an agony of tears moans out, “ My widowed pillow ! Iona ! my widowed pillow ! ” Oh, mother ! the singing lady—the weeping lady—is you ! and I am that little child !

‘ Yes, dearest ! ’ weeps Lady Olive. ‘ I had just returned from Italy—*alone* ; having left behind me—in the Italian church-yard—a spot of emerald turf and twining

passion-flowers, beneath which lay all that remained to me of the being I loved best on earth! the young husband,—the tender father! Oh, Iona, you were the only thing left to me! and could I give you up!

‘And, mother!’ continues Iona, in ever growing excitement, ‘I remember more;—another carriage dashes up to the door—with four horses and two outriders,—and, with a little cry of joy, you—yourself—run out, and open the door! An old man appears—whose face is familiar to me! (Mother, it is the old man whose miniature you always wear—with a coronet above his head!) He quickly descends from the carriage,—tears roll down his cheeks, and

he folds you in his arms! He supports you up the steps,—and oh, mother!—How you cry! You call him “Papa,” and he sits by you, speaking soothingly and tenderly, as you do to me! You laid your head on his shoulder, as I do on yours, and I felt to love him for loving you! and when you said, “Iona! kiss grand-papa’s hand,” I said, “No! I had rather kiss his face!” Then you both laughed, and he kissed me on the mouth, and said, “Olive! she is like us! she has our expression!” He was short, broad, and had a florid kindly countenance,—gray hair, and his hands were beautiful and shaped like yours!’

‘Yes, and don’t you remember his asking what I called you—and I said, “Iona!”’

‘Ah yes! his answer was, “Iona! Iona! a pretty name, but I love the old names—Charlotte, Augusta, Mary, or Amelia! But Iona! oh, yes,” he said, kissing you. “Darling, I understand why it is Iona!” And then, mother,’ added Iona, laughing, he looked round, and saw Drax standing, and he said, “God bless my soul! How do you do, ma’am?” and he got off the sofa and bowed, and when she curtsied he said, “Pray sit down, ma’am!” and he gave her a chair, and she looked so surprised—and did as she was bid!’

‘For the first time in her life,’ said Lady Olive, grimly.

‘—And she sat down, and, as he went away (which he soon did, you cling-

ing to him as he went down the steps), some workmen and all the gardeners collected round the carriage and cheered him; he took off his hat, and said, "God bless my soul! Thank you all!" and drove away. Then you showed me the miniature he had given you of the young man with curly fair hair and blue eyes, and you kissed it and whispered, "Your father, Iona," and it never leaves your wrist night or day.'

Lady Olive kissed her daughter, and said, softly,

'It all seems a dream—does it not? And now, Iona, we must try to make friends with your father's parents! They

*proceeding
upon especial*

DORINDA.

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surely must love *his* child ! Let us consult together how we must go to work.'

But everything was totally different to what Olive expected, and (as is so often the case when one has decided upon any especial plan of proceeding) she found that all her tactics for negotiating peace, had, by Providence's interference, been scattered to the winds ! She had written to Leonora, informing her of her intended return to Riverstairs, begging her to visit her the same evening, as she wished to consult her concerning her visit to Falcon's Rest ; but Olive had not been an hour in the house before the following letter from Leonora was put into her hand :

‘MY DEAR OLIVE,

‘I am sure you will be shocked to hear the reason why I did not meet you to-day on your arrival. Poor Lord Glenalmond had a stroke last night, from which he has never rallied. He has not spoken since, and the most painful part of it is that he evidently wants to say something,—and cannot! Ramsay (who we sent for at once) says that, as he knew you were coming, it may be he wishes to see you; for he constantly watches the door—never taking his eyes away, except when he looks at poor Uncle Ion’s picture, which hangs over the door and opposite his bed.

‘The poor old man was taken while

sitting at his writing-table, having had an angry altercation with Lady Glenalmond ; but I will meet you on your way here (pray start *at once*), and I will tell you all about it. He looks dreadful—his face all drawn—and it might shock Iona, so don't bring her.

‘ Your loving

‘ NELL.’

Olive started instantly,—and alone ; glad to spare Iona any shock ; and, half-way on the road, Leonora met her. She had hastily thrown on a bonnet and shawl, and Olive thought her perfectly beautiful ! She was very affectionate and full of feeling for the poor old man, who (she said) had

much softened lately; so much so, that, although it had for long been a tabooed subject, he had often lately called Leonora into his own private room, to speak about Olive's return to River-stairs.

‘And what did he say?’ asked Olive, anxiously.

‘When I told him yesterday that you were coming back to-day, he said: “I am glad of it, Leonora, I think we were hard upon her; I will go and see her myself!” But unfortunately, just as he was speaking, Lady Glenalmond entered noiselessly—in her chair, and had a look of anger on her face; but she said nothing while I was there!’

‘In her chair!’ repeated Olive, wonderingly; ‘what do you mean?’

‘Oh! I forgot,’ returned Leonora, ‘you never got my letter, telling you about her illness.—Lady Glenalmond found out I was writing to you about it,—and stopped the letter.

‘About a year ago she had a fall, and has ever since been gradually losing the use of her limbs. She guides herself about the house, and in the garden, in a noiseless, mechanical chair, and, in order that she should get about without help, all the doors are left ajar, and all steps on the ground-floor (on which are both her bed-room and sitting-rooms) have been covered with easy inclined planes, so that

she appears at your side when you least expect it !

‘How very uncanny !’ exclaimed Olive ;
‘but how was the poor old man taken ?’

‘It was yesterday,—just before dinner. I was already dressed, and ran out into the garden to pick some flowers to put into my gown, and, as I returned, I passed outside the windows of Lord Glenalmond’s sitting-room (there are three of them opening down to the ground). He was at his writing-table, with an obstinate and annoyed look on his face ; Lady Glenalmond was at his side—in her chair—and she was gesticulating angrily. I heard her say, “Ye’re nae better than an auld feckless fule !” and then I saw him fall ! I

instantly stepped into the room, and, rushing to the bell, rang for assistance; for I knew at a glance what had happened.'

'And what did Lady Glenalmond do?'

'She tried to get a piece of paper out of his hand, which he clutched all the more firmly, and he looked so angrily at her that I ventured to say :

"For God's sake, Lady Glenalmond, let him alone!" so she desisted, and he holds it still! but—here we are!' and Leonora rang the bell.



CHAPTER VIII.

‘Pray you now, forget and forgive ; I am old and foolish.’

UNLIKE the usual celerity with which the door was opened, no one answered the summons ; but Leonora and Olive heard the violent ringing of bells within, and the sounds of feet running up and down stairs.

‘Something must have happened,’ said Leonora, looking frightened. ‘We will go round and get in by the drawing-room

windows.' They did so, and Leonora said :
'You stay here, Olive ; I will go and reconnoitre.'

In a few minutes she returned, pale and agitated.

'There is a great change,—the doctor says the poor old man is dying fast, and Ramsay says you are to come in and see him at once.'

Leonora led the way, Olive followed, and they passed swiftly through Lord Glenalmond's sitting-room, which was almost entirely furnished by Chippendale bookcases, full of rare books. There were only two paintings in the room,—and both portraits of Lady Glenalmond. One represented her in her wedding-gown—looking

beautiful, but cold and proud—and quite innocent of the stereotyped smile usually introduced by artists when painting ladies under such circumstances ; the other was the more pleasing picture of the two. In it Lady Glenalmond was seated on a sofa, her youngest boy on her knee, while the elder played at her feet.

‘ I wonder,’ Olive thought, ‘ whether she really ever looked as tenderly as that—at my Ion !’

The old man’s writing-table was left as it was at the moment when he was taken for death. Some papers were scattered about, and a cheque-book was lying open,—and the pen, he had been in the act of using, was scarcely dry !

Leonora now held a *portière* back, and Olive, passing through it, found herself in the bed-chamber,—so soon to be the abode of death !

The old man lay propped up by pillows, and by the side of her dying husband sat his old wife—in her mechanical chair,—clad in a white quilted silk dressing-gown, trimmed with costly lace ; her hair as white as her gown, her eyes blacker, her eyebrows heavier and sterner than ever, and also quite black. She sat cold and impassive—with her eyes fixed on the doctor's face, who stood opposite her,—on the other side of the bed—holding his patient's wrist. Lord Ramsay stood by the doctor, and the dying man's gaze rarely wandered

from the picture of his youngest son, which hung over the door exactly opposite the bed.

The slight bustle caused by Lady Olive's entrance seemed to attract the old man, who slightly leaned his head forward as he perceived her. Then, shutting his eyes for a moment, he opened them again with a kind smile, and looked towards the door, eagerly,—then tears came into his eyes; and he looked disappointed.

‘He is not satisfied,’ whispered the doctor. ‘He wants some one else! Who is it?’

‘Is it Iona?’ said Lady Olive, coming forward and kissing Lord Glenalmond's hand.

The sick man smiled assent.

‘ I will fetch her at once,’ said Leonora ;
and instantly left the room.

‘ His lordship would like you to come near,’ said the doctor to Olive, making room for her ; and, as she took the place, her eyes wandered across the bed to the old lady opposite—and she was shocked by the look of unbending hostility which flashed from the black eyes ; a look which quite precluded Olive’s making even a sign of recognition.

Olive now took Lord Glenalmond’s hand, and approaching her face to his, whispered gently, as she kissed his forehead :

‘ Ion’s father, and therefore mine ! Oh !
God guide you through the shadows, and

you will meet the Saviour—and our loved one—on the Other Side !’

Then she whispered again,

‘Iona will be here in a few minutes.’

She felt her hand tremblingly pressed—and retained. In about twenty minutes Iona appeared in the doorway,—standing shyly irresolute, exactly beneath her father’s picture ; and, as she did so, a slanting golden gleam of the setting sun shot into the doorway, embracing both the living child and the dead father in its golden arms.

At this supreme moment the likeness between Iona and her father struck everyone, and a quick flush passed over Lord Glenalmond’s pale face, while a tear rolled down his furrowed cheek.

Olive now brought her child up to her grandfather's bedside, and there was a slight movement of his lips, which seemed to whisper, 'Nearer—nearer !'

The trembling girl approached.

'Stoop !' the lips seemed to say ; and Iona bent over her grandfather, while a feeling of sorrow,—of tender pity, stirred her soul, and with tears she kissed the clammy forehead, saying,

'Grandfather ! grandfather ! Say "God bless you !"'

S.M.A. Shah Nade.

With some effort the dying man took her hand and pressed a paper into it ; then such a smile of content, as had rarely been seen to visit it, flitted across his face, and the word, 'Pray,' broke from the gasping lips.

S.M.A. Shah Nade.

With her hand upon her grandfather's breast, the girl sank on her knees, as did all who surrounded the bed; and even the stern old grandmother bent her head, while Iona's girlish voice clearly repeated the Lord's Prayer. As she came to the words, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive ——' there was a deep-drawn sigh,—and Iona felt as though the prisoned heart beneath her hand gave a sudden leap,—there was a shiver—then another gasp,—and the spirit took flight, and entered the presence of the God that gave it!

Instinctively Lady Olive and Leonora approached Lady Glenalmond; but her black eyes still sought the doctor's, and,

when his expression told her that all was over, she waved everyone from her, saying coldly :

‘ All but the doctor and myself leave the room.’

All accordingly turned to go—but Iona had sunk fainting by the bedside. The doctor picked up the paper her grandfather had given her, and delivered it to her mother ; and then carried the unconscious girl from the room.

Old Lady Glenalmond was not seen by any but her own immediate attendants till the morning after the funeral, when Leonora,—having descended rather earlier than usual, to preside over the breakfast,

as her brother (now Lord Glenalmond) was about to leave for Scotland,—to her surprise found the old lady already in her chair, cross and hungry! She was clad in a white dresing-gown (which she never afterwards discarded) positively refusing to wear a widow's cap! She did not condescend to say, as so many widows of the present day do:

‘Poor Tom used to say he wouldn't hear of my wearing a widow's cap;’ or ‘Johnny's last words were, “Now don't go and disfigure yourself,”’ &c., &c., *ad infinitum*. No, Lady Glenalmond simply branded widow's caps as ‘feckless’ articles, and said she would not wear one, and ‘there was an end on't!’

Meanwhile, it was evident that something besides her lord's death disturbed my lady,—for her brows were ‘married!’ Heavily and gloomily the straight black line overhung the gleaming eyes,—themselves capacious windows for the evil spirits that dwelt within!

After Lady Olive's return from Falcon's Rest, she was anxious for days about Iona, who was terribly distressed and overcome by what she had witnessed; and the paper the doctor had delivered to her was for awhile completely forgotten. Olive had put it in her pocket,—all crumpled as it was,—and wondering, a day or two later, what it could possibly be,

she pulled it out, and could scarcely speak for astonishment, when she discovered it was a cheque for twenty thousand pounds,—made out in Iona's name !

When the girl was sufficiently recovered to 'take in' so startling a surprise, Lady Olive told her the astounding fact.

'But,' said Lady Olive, 'I must tell Lady Glenalmond about it.'

At that moment Leonora came in, looking very blank ; and Olive told her what had occurred. Leonora said,

'You need not trouble yourself to tell Lady Glenalmond, for she knows it already, and that is what the quarrel was about—when he had the stroke ; and Lady Glenalmond sends me now to forbid your

writing or going to her about it. And, indeed, dear Olive, it is no good your doing anything at present; she is much too bitterly angry to listen to anything you can say. She is the most vicious—cruel—overbearing——’

‘Hush, Leonora!’ said Olive, gently. ‘We must not forget who she is—my mother-in-law—and your grandmother!’

‘Mother!’ said Iona, excitedly, ‘listen to me.—You told me you would give up anything—except myself—to gain her love—did you not?’

‘I did, Iona; but, alas! what can I do?’

‘Mother!’ said Iona, passionately, ‘let me return this money, if by doing so we

might make her kind to, and fond of, you. We are rich enough, dear mother, and happy ! and we don't want the money ! If she is unhappy, and wants it,—let her have it ! Let me write and give her back the cheque !

‘ Give up the twenty thousand pounds !’ said Leonora, amazed.

‘ Yes,’ said Iona, with a burst of tears. ‘ You don't know, Nell, how my mother used to cry over Lord and Lady Glenalmond's unkindness ! I daresay she will leave it back to me—when she dies ; but if she does not—never mind ! Oh, mother, we are so happy together, and have been so happy without it !’

‘ That is a good thought, my Iona !’

said Olive, after a few minutes. ‘Write the letter at once—surely that must touch her!’

So the following letter was sent :

‘MY DEAREST GRANDMOTHER GLENALMOND,

‘Pray, oh, pray! do not let the twenty thousand pounds come between you and mother. I would rather have your love (and so would mother) than any amount of money! I am in real earnest, and want you to love us,—so I send back the cheque; and when it pleases God to call you also to join your husband, (ah! God grant that day may be far off!), then you could (but only if you liked) leave it back to me; and so I should feel that I

inherited it with *your* blessing as well as *his* ; but let that be as *you like* ! *I only want you to love mother.* So I enclose the cheque.

‘ Your devoted grandchild,

‘ IONA RAMSAY.

‘ P.S.—MY DEAR LADY GLENALMOND,—
This is all Iona’s own idea, but I *heartily* give my sanction to the act.—Your affectionate daughter-in-law,

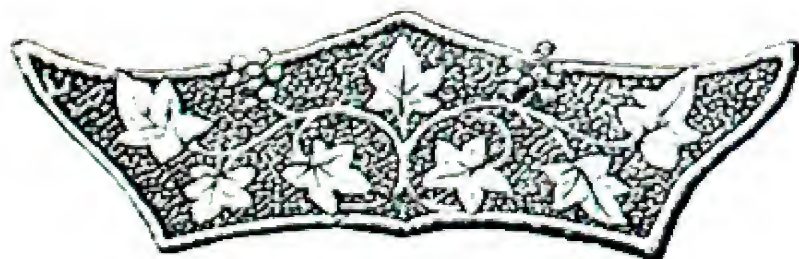
‘ OLIVE RAMSAY.’

‘ Well !’ exclaimed Leonora, ‘ I have always been brought up in the idea that “ a fool and his money are soon parted,” but in this case it is an angel and hers !’ And, with tears in her eyes, the warm-

hearted girl started on her peace-making mission.

The next day, as Olive and Iona were sitting in the summer-house working, and wondering what kind of an answer they should receive from Falcon's Rest, a servant appeared with a note. It was from Leonora.

'Pray come,' she wrote; 'your letter has done its work.—Your loving NELL.'





CHAPTER IX.

‘Blood is thicker than water.’



LIVE and her daughter soon found themselves at the door of Falcon's Rest, and, as usual, Leonora met them in the hall, and, throwing her arm round Olive's neck, whispered :

‘Now, at last, she has found out what you are!’ and, conducting them into the drawing-room,—there sat the gaunt figure,

clad in white,—with blazing black eyes, which, however, seemed softened, and the eyelids swollen with weeping. *S.M.A. Shan*

‘Come hither, my dear, dear daughter!’ the old woman said, in a broken voice, ‘and you, my precious grandchild! and listen to me,—while I say, in all humility, may God forgive my hardness,—my wickedness, as generously as you have! Pride, and the love of money and power, have been the bane of my life, choking up all feeling,—all softness! You have fought me with my own weapons, and nothing you could have done would have touched me like this act! for in one moment you taught me that *something*, after all, is stronger than money,—and that is Love!’

‘ Oh, Lady Glenalmond,’ said Olive, ‘ you are too good—too good to humble yourself so !’

Here Leonora would have left the room ; but Lady Glenalmond said,

‘ Leonora—stay ! People should be ashamed of *doing* wrong before their children, but not ashamed of *acknowledging* it,—and I have been wrong all through ; but, you see, you have touched me through the ruling passion of my life—money !’

‘ It was all Iona’s thought, Lady Glenalmond,’ said Olive, thinking she personally was receiving too much credit.

‘ Oh ! I know—I know, but I was leaving her to the last for—for I scarcely know what to say to her ! My Iona, I cannot

—cannot take your money ! and I have returned the cheque—but nothing can undo your act of love, my child,—and what you have taught me,—that money is strong, but love is stronger !—but oh, my God ! how can I forgive myself—when I remember that, by my obstinate will, my pride, and malice, I shortened my husband's life.'

For months the old lady could not get over this terrible thought, and she probably never would have got over it, had she been a younger woman ; but when people get old,—as old as Lady Glenalmond,—their feelings become blunted—deadened, and it was so with her ; but the reconciliation between her and Olive and Iona was perfect. The first thing the old lady

thought of was to have the door between the gardens reopened, and every day Olive spent happy hours at Falcon's Rest, reading and talking to 'her mother' (as she now called her), who became gentler, and alas! weaker every day, and more eager to prepare herself for the great change which she knew, and which every one saw, could not be far off.

But a great surprise was in store for Olive. One day she got a letter from the Duchess of Cheviotdale, asking to be allowed to come and spend a day or two at Riverstairs,—and might she (she asked) be allowed to bring Sir Guy Deverell? She stated that he had come into a large fortune, which would enable him to marry,

and that he had been much smitten with Leonora—having seen her at one or two balls in London. He felt very anxious to see more of her, and the duchess ended by saying :

‘ You know, dear Olive, I am no match-maker ; but, in spite of the trouble he has been to us, I am very fond of Guy, and a good wife would be “ the making of him.” His affair with Margaret could never be readjusted—in fact, she will never marry ; but, if Leonora is all he says she is, they might be very happy together. Will you find out from the young lady, (who I know lives much with you,) whether she would be agreeable to Guy’s trying to gain her affections ?’

‘ Well ! ’ exclaimed Olive, after getting the letter, ‘ I am as anxious about my Leonora’s happiness, as she is about her Guy—and,—but I will question Leonora ; ’ and, the next time that young lady appeared, she did question her about her London acquaintances ; and Leonora, who was the very soul of truth, said suddenly :

‘ Oh, Olive ! I have long wished to tell you something—but was shy ! but—but at one time I fancied a young man liked me ; but, going to so few balls, I saw no more of him ! I know that he knows you. It is Sir Guy Deverill—but I have never seen him again ; at least,—once I fancied I saw him,—and some other young men, rowing towards Richmond. I was on the

terrace, and I think he saw me, but I was not certain—but——’

On hearing this, Lady Olive told her of the duchess’s letter, and Leonora blushed, and, with a few shy tears, hid her head on Olive’s shoulder; who felt, then, that Guy would not have much difficulty in gaining his object;—‘but how’ (Olive thought) ‘about Dorinda?’

In a day or two the duchess and the young man arrived, and Olive determined in her own mind:

‘If he is an honest man and really loves her, he will tell her the truth about Margaret. Oh! I hope he will—I hope he will! and also—as much as he can,—about Dorinda!’

Full opportunity was given to Sir Guy and Leonora to be together, and one day the girl ran in to Lady Olive's bed-room, and, throwing herself into her sister-in-law's arms, said :

‘ I am so happy. He has asked me to be his wife, and he is going to speak to Lady Glenalmond !’

‘ Well ?’ said Olive.

Leonora looked puzzled, and said :

‘ You do not seem quite pleased, Olive !’

‘ Yes, dear—I should be—if—did you tell him *you had never loved anyone before* ?’

‘ Oh, yes ! he knows that—and then he told me all about Margaret and Dorinda—and everything ! and he says, that since he knew me,—he has never looked

at anyone else,—and that he will be—a loyal—true husband! He opened his heart entirely to me—and hid nothing!

‘Thank God!’ said Olive, clasping the girl to her heart, ‘then he is a true man—and with all my heart I wish you joy!’

Lady Glenalmond was very pleased,—when she could be made to understand; but her mind had for some time been going astray, and impossible complications arose in it. She fancied Guy was to marry the Duchess of Cheviotdale, and could not conceive why *her* leave was asked, and kept murmuring, with great dignity, that ‘she had not the honour of the acquaintance of the young people.’ Then she thought Olive was the bride—and, fore-

seeing that painful misunderstandings might arise, Olive sent for young Lord Glenalmond, and after that all went smoothly.

The marriage took place quietly from Riverstairs, in consequence of the recent death at Falcon's Rest, and, after Leonora's departure, Olive and Iona devoted their lives to Lady Glenalmond, who gradually became more and more paralysed; and one day, while Olive was reading the Bible to her, the old lady suddenly made an effort as if to rise, and, falling forward, was received into Olive's arms, and, before assistance was procured, she had whispered to Olive:

‘It's coming, dear! Thank God I die

in your arms!—which is more than I deserve! Kiss me—Olive!’

Olive did so—and the poor old lady lapsed into unconsciousness—from which she never rallied.

Her daughter-in-law nursed her tenderly for many days;—but one day, as she was praying by her side, with her hand in hers, the black eyes—hitherto closed,—suddenly opened wide,—a fitful light seemed to gleam in them for a moment—a smile flitted across the wan face, and with a gentle sigh, Lady Glenalmond passed away!

Yes, she had gone to her rest,—and the dark eyes were reverently closed by her who had learnt to look upon her as a daughter; and, after the last sad rites,

Olive and Iona repaired once more to Kensington, for a few days' rest, before paying a long-promised visit to Broke Abbey, where they hoped to meet the duchess, and Leonora and Guy.

One morning a foreign letter was handed to Lady Olive.

‘A foreign letter!’ exclaimed Lady Olive, ‘from whom can it be!’

In a few minutes she added, gravely,

‘From Dorinda! I thought she had quite forgotten me.’

Gradually, as she read, Olive's sweet face became clouded, and full of agitation.

‘Anything the matter, mother?’ asked Iona.

‘Yes, dear; poor Dorinda is either very ill or very unhappy—I can’t make out which. Read it aloud, Iona.’

Iona obeyed.

‘DEAREST OLIVE,

‘For the love of God, come to me; I know you will not forsake me! I am in the greatest distress and want your help. Come quickly, for I never know what may happen! I have much I want you to do, and you only can I trust.’

The letter went on giving directions about the journey, and ended,

‘Your unhappy

‘DORINDA.’

‘Iona, can I leave you?’

‘Mother, I am quite well! Do go—and quickly. You see she says “For God’s sake!” You must not resist such an appeal! Besides, I can go alone with the duchess to Broke Abbey—as settled—and you can join us there afterwards.’

Olive felt impelled to go to Dorinda; so, after settling with the duchess about the journey to Broke Abbey, she bid farewell for awhile to Iona, and started the next day. She loved Dorinda, and would go miles to serve her; and, although she had disapproved of many things she had heard of her, she never forsook an old friend.

‘It is when we suffer—or sin, that we find out who are our real friends,’ Olive would say.

Oh, if all 'good' people would remember, that 'When we were yet sinners, God loved us!' He loved the sinner, but hated the sin; and should we not do the same!

Lady Olive (who had started hurriedly, without man or maid,) had a long journey, full of delays and disagreeables as to weather and arrangements, but at last she found herself in the Prince de la Styrie's carriage, on the road from the station to the Hotel de la Styrie. She felt very nervous, and, with a mysterious fear at her heart, she entered the house.

As she alighted the prince stepped forward, and, with much formality, kissed her hand, gave her his arm, and hurried her up

the broad staircase, as though he dreaded any conversation. He looked so severe, so stern (but otherwise unaltered), that Lady Olive felt tongue-tied! At last she faltered out: *S. M. H. French. French.*

‘How is Dorinda? Not ill, I hope!’

They had arrived at the first landing, as she spoke, and the prince answered,—pointing to a servant who stood there,—

‘Madame! On vous y conduira!’ Then, bowing ceremoniously, he left her.

Lady Olive, was mystified,—worried,—anxious; and, following the footman, came to a doorway, covered by a heavy *portière*; the man held it back for her to pass through, and she found herself in an ante-chamber, surrounded by mirrors let into

the oak panels ; no furniture was there, except a single table and chair, evidently for the use of the old official, (wearing the prince's livery,) who sat there reading the *gazettes*. He rose when Lady Olive appeared, and bowed silently ; then conducted her to the further end of the room, where was another *portière*. The old man pulled a bell, and the curtain was pushed aside from within by a middle-aged lady, who curtsied to the visitor, with no welcoming smile, and conducted her into a beautiful apartment, also panelled in oak, and full of portraits. Lady Olive began to be weary of all this dumb show, and said, rather impatiently :

‘ I come, Madame ——?’

‘Madame Dubois,’ said the lady, coldly.

‘I come, Madame Dubois, to see Madame la Princesse at her own desire,—conduct me at once to her—if you please!’

Madame Dubois slightly elevated her eyebrows, (or would have done, had they been all her own,) with an expression of mingled surprise and *hauteur*; and then answered, calmly:

‘The *Princess’s* desire!’

Lady Olive coloured indignantly; but at that moment she heard a rustling at the further end of the room, and Dorinda appeared! Giving a little cry of pleasure, she ran towards her old friend, and threw herself into her arms!



CHAPTER X.

‘There is no time so miserable, but a man may be true.’



O kind, and so good!’ Dorinda sobbed, kissing Olive frantically on the forehead, eyes, lips, and hands.

‘But you knew I’d come, darling,’ said Olive, tenderly. ‘But don’t cry so! Oh! don’t cry!’

Meanwhile Madame Dubois stood by

with a cruel, contemptuous smile on her face, 'taking stock' of the two agitated ladies; and the princess, seeing Olive look questioningly at the unwelcome stranger, said:

'Madame Dubois, you will perhaps kindly leave us. I wish to be alone with my friend.'

'Perhaps, Madame la Princesse,' answered the woman, again elevating her would-be eyebrows, and with a tolerating smile, 'perhaps I might not be wanted for an hour or so.'

'As you please, Madame Dubois,' answered Dorinda, coldly; upon which the smiling lady, curtseying, retired.

'Dorinda! what is the meaning of all

this ? Who is that very nasty woman ? I am so glad she is gone !

‘ Hush ! pray ! ’ answered Dorinda, ‘ what she said was only to put us off our guard ; she has no intention of going out ! ’

‘ Oh, Dorinda ! do explain ! Everything is so stiff and strange. Does the prince disapprove of my visit ? He would not come up here with me, and we used to be such friends ! What is the matter ? ’

Again Dorinda cast her arms round her friend and burst into tears, sobbing great sobs, like a child.

Olive was much shocked, but let her weep on for some minutes, thinking it might relieve her ; but, as she became almost convulsed, she got alarmed, and said,

‘ Dearest, calm yourself ! Shall I call anyone ? Is Estelle still with you ? ’

‘ Yes—thank God. They wished to take her from me, but Achille—my dear doctor—prevented that ; but, Olive, mind when you see her—take no notice of her. She pretends to favour Dubois ; she must do so !—but I will explain all to you soon. I must send for Achille—I want him to see you.’

She rang, and Estelle instantly appeared. She looked once at Lady Olive, and a glance of recognition shot from her eyes ; but she took no further notice.

‘ Please—Estelle—tell Monsieur Achille to come and speak to me.’

Estelle vanished, and in a short time the doctor appeared. He bowed to the princess, (who jumped up to meet him,) and then to Lady Olive.

‘You wish to speak to me, madame?’ he said.

‘Yes, Achille—I have a favour to ask! May I see Lady Olive quite alone? I mean, do you think Dubois might be dispensed with altogether, while Lady Olive is here? Oh! give her a holiday—good Achille!’

Monsieur Achille shook his head.

‘No—madame!’ he answered, ‘take my advice, and don’t ask it.’

Dorinda looked disappointed, and while she was speaking to Monsieur Achille,

Olive took the opportunity of noticing her appearance, and it went to her heart to see how pale, how transparently thin she had become. Her eyes too were very bloodshot, and had a glittering, furtive expression which she thought very alarming.

The conversation between doctor and patient meanwhile went on :

‘ Then—if you won’t——’

‘ Can’t !’ interrupted the little man.

‘ Won’t and can’t !’ retorted Dorinda.

‘ Can’t !’ persisted Achille.

‘ Well—well !’ said Dorinda, pettishly, ‘ if you can’t do that, may I drive out alone with Lady Olive every day, without Dubois ? Oh ! dear, kind Achille ! you can manage it !’

‘I will try!’ said Achille.

‘You *can* do it!’ said Dorinda.

‘I will try!’ reiterated Achille.

Dorinda said no more, but it was almost ludicrous to see (and even Olive remarked) the little doctor’s efforts to bestonily uncompromising, and how a smile from Dorinda, or a touch of her hand, softened him at once! But he was perplexed at this last request.

‘I will ask,’ he repeated, as he took leave; and a terror she dared not name came over Olive, as she followed Achille out of the room, hoping to gather something from him concerning Dorinda’s health; but he avoided her, and hurriedly shaking hands would have left her without a word.

Olive, however, feeling drawn towards him, retained his hand gently—and he whispered, without looking at her :

‘ You will be sure, miladi—if you drive with her,—not to let her get out *anywhere*,—no shops,—in fact, *she must speak to no one*, and you must pass your word to that effect !’

Olive looked amazed—indignant, and the old man, understanding the lady’s speaking face and tearful eyes, said sorrowfully,

‘ Ah, miladi ! I see you don’t yet understand ! but she will tell you—poor child ! I see you are a real friend ! so mark what I say : do not try to alter matters yet,—she would be worse off. Oh ! Lady Olive,—these *conseils de famille* are wicked things and

should not be allowed ; but, believe me, at present it is best as it is. I would not say this, if I did not know I could serve her best so! Ah! you love her—poor child, and do not I also? but remember what I say : *The prince makes things out worse than they are ; but she goes too far the other way !* The borderline, Lady Olive, is very indistinct !' Then resuming the official manner, (which he had unconsciously dropped,) the little man added :

'If you will give your word about not letting her get out *anywhere*, she shall go alone with you.'

'I promise,' said poor Olive, tearfully.

'Ah! *c'est bien!* Then she shall go alone with you, and tell her I will also,

during your visit, try to ease her a little of—that old Dubois, for *I trust you*. I wish you a very good night, madame ;’ and with that Monsieur Achille left.

‘ Now, come and take off your things,’ said Dorinda. ‘ You must be very tired.’

‘ I am,’ answered Olive, full of grief and horror at what she now suspected. ‘ Let me come to your room, Dorinda!’ and when they had sat down side by side Dorinda whispered,

‘ Speak low now,—in this room,—or we shall be overheard.’

‘ Shall I shut the door?’ suggested Olive.

‘ Doors! There are none! Oh, Olive!

night or day I am never alone. Even sitting as we are here, *she* is watching us ! but don't look shocked. Smile, Olive, smile ! and oh, if you knew what it is to toss sleepless almost all night,—then to turn wearily on your bed, and see the curtain gently drawn aside,—and there *she* is, in her white night-dress, standing watching—watching ! Oh ! Olive,' in an agonizing whisper, made all the more painful from the stereotyped smile on her face, 'they are driving me mad—if I am not so already !'

'But——' said Olive, indignantly.

'Smile, Olive—for God's sake, smile !' reiterated Dorinda—painfully anxious—
'she is looking—listening !'

‘ Why does the prince allow it, Olive ?
He is to blame !’

‘ *He wants to drive me mad, and shut me up—Achille says so, and that only by gentleness on my part—and submission, (fancy a submissive Dorinda!—if you can!)—can it be averted !* He held a *conseil de famille*—a thing unheard of in dear Old England—and they all settled he was to keep me here unless I became “unmanageable !” (but smile, Olive, for God’s sake, smile !) We will get behind the screen good Achille has promised me—when it comes, and I will then tell you all, and ask your advice. You see, unfortunately, I am a French subject now. But, hark ! don’t you hear something ?’

‘Yes,’ said Olive. ‘I hear a woman’s voice singing——’

‘Ah! thank God! Estelle is telling me that Dubois has gone out,—when she returns, Estelle coughs.’

‘Oh! Monsieur Achille told me he would get rid of Dubois for you—as much as he could—during my visit.’

‘Ah! that is it, then. But now—Olive, I have sent for you,—as I wish—for once—to open my heart to you—quite entirely. I know you have God in your heart,—and that—whatever I tell you—you will not forsake me——’ She paused anxiously for Olive’s answer.

‘Dorinda,—as God is above me, and as I love and serve Him, I will not forsake you!’

‘Whatever I have done?’ asked Dorinda, almost incredulously.

‘Whatever you have done,’ said Olive, firmly.

‘Supposing—I had—murdered some one, would you not forsake me then?’

Olive gasped, while Dorinda watched her carefully,—then the words came.

‘Dorinda, I swear—I never will forsake you——’

‘Nor betray me?’

‘Nor betray you; but supposing you have—committed murder, I would never rest till I had persuaded you to confess!’

Dorinda looked oddly at her, then she laughed merrily, and Olive started in surprise at the sound, for her nerves had

been stretched to the most painful tension by the above serious conversation.

‘Oh!’ said Dorinda, still laughing, ‘you dear old Olive! always the same dear,—true,—simple,—loving creature! Did you think I was going to confess—a murder! Well, that is all nonsense! I am not as bad as that—yet! I was only trying you!’

‘Dorinda, you are unfair—cruel!’

‘Dearest, dearest Olive, forgive me! I know you would stick to poor Dorinda; and, although I have not done quite so bad as that, I have much to confess,—and, after I have told you all, then love and pity me, if you can, for God only knows how miserable I am!’

She wept now, and Olive, throwing her arm round the poor, wilful, unhappy woman, listened, as Dorinda proceeded to relate the history we already know of her departure from London, her reception at Talavo, her lie to the prince about her hopes of an heir, (she laughed heartily here, and said she had never had the ghost of a hope of a child !)—about her visit to the Comtesse d'Alembert,—her thefts, and the recognition of her by Laménotte, (who she admired immensely, for his clever disguise. ‘So like a Frenchman!’ she said.) She related her journey with Achille, laughed at his hair, and turned deadly pale at the threat of the mad-house !—and, bursting into tears, she told

Olive that *that* was the sword hanging over her head! She told everything truthfully. She hid nothing,—except one deadly secret—*that* she kept to herself.

While relating her history, she became excited,—interested,—almost amused, and interlarded it quite naturally with such evidences of daring recklessness, such bitter hate and anger against her husband, such exultation in her many successes, such contempt for the stupidity of her dupes, such a wild sense of the ridiculous,—all jumbled up with some such real and touching repentance,—that Olive was bewildered, and knew not what to say, what to advise.

Anyhow, she could not think, whatever

Dorinda's faults, that her punishment should be such as to foster despair,—madness, as she felt sure it would do. So, in her own mind, she decided to wait till she had had the drive alone with Dorinda (when she knew their conversation would not be overheard or interrupted); and that, after hearing and weighing the whole, she would 'beard the lion in his den,' and speak seriously with the prince.





CHAPTER XI.

‘Do you not know I am a woman? When I think, I must speak!’

THE next day they took their drive, and, for hours before, Dorinda was in such a state of happy excitement, that it touched Olive inexpressibly.

They drove for over two hours in the Bois de Boulogne, talking and even laughing

at times to their heart's content; and any of the many individuals who watched the beautiful carriage pass by, drawn by the magnificent horses, and containing two smiling and lovely ladies, little dreamt what a tragedy would soon begin,—nay, had already begun,—to be enacted in the home of the most lovely and most smiling of the two.

During the drive, Dorinda told Olive many circumstances concerning her ‘prison house and jailors,’ which she dared not have whispered in the house; and the feeling of having completely and truthfully opened her heart to one who, although she condemned, really loved her, was a luxury

which exhilarated and refreshed her drooping spirits.

As they were passing a pretty house, situated on a lovely green lawn,—a café, from whence were issuing sounds of music and hilarity,—Dorinda said,

‘Olive, I’m going to get out here—to buy some flowers; the man knows me, and he has a lovely garden.’

Olive’s heart stood still,—but she said, firmly,

‘And my—our promise, Dorinda?’

‘Oh, nonsense! I can square it with the coachman and footman; let us tell them to stop!’

‘Dorinda—don’t do it! I refuse to

do it. If you persist, I will tell Monsieur Achille at once, and we shall never drive again !’

‘Oh ! *you*, then, are also one of my jailers !’ said Dorinda, bitterly.

Olive looked pained.

‘Is that kind, Dorinda ? Now listen to me ; I have not told you before, as I feared destroying the pleasure of your drive, but (don’t look round !) Madame Dubois has been following us in a closed *fiacre* all the afternoon !’

(‘The old devil !’ muttered the princess, who was not, and never had been, very particular as to the epithets she cast at those she hated. ‘Achille shall pay for this !’)

‘—And,’ continued Olive, ‘I advise you to be very quiet and well-behaved, or we shall never be allowed to drive again! But, mind, Dorinda, I should have refused to get out all the same, even had she not been there, for—my word was passed!’

Dorinda looked sulkily wretched for a few minutes; then, squeezing her companion’s hand affectionately, she said, in a sorrowful voice,

‘Ah, ’tis a case of the leopard and his spots: you—always good, I—always bad! A very spotted leopard I ever was—and ever shall be.’

‘Ah, Dorinda, there is a remedy. Try it, dear,’ said Olive.

‘Don’t preach!’ answered Dorinda,

pettishly; and Olive sighed and was silent.

As they were returning home, a small but well-appointed brougham came abreast of the carriage. The servants were in plain black liveries, and Dorinda thought she recognised the coachman, as one that had driven her from time to time; and, on looking rather curiously at the occupants of the brougham, she beheld—the prince—her husband, with a child of about two years on his knee, and a lovely young woman by his side.

Dorinda turned a death-like colour, and the prince, looking at her steadily, made no sign,—but simply pulled down the blind!

The whole circumstance did not take a second of time, but it was just one of those seconds that decided a woman's fate,—a fate which, before it, had been trembling in the balance.

‘Did you see *that*?’ Dorinda breathlessly asked Olive.

‘Yes, darling,’ answered Olive gently, but sorrowfully, ‘but, dear, has he no niece?—no relation?’

She spoke almost at random, to quiet the agitated, unhappy woman at her side, indeed, she scarcely knew what to say, for that one glance inside the brougham had so plainly and unmistakably declared the relations its occupants bore to each other, that she was as one dumb.

‘ I don’t care a *sou* for him, personally,’ said the princess, looking like a fiend incarnate, ‘ but I did hope to win him back that I might regain my place in the world. This, however, puts an end to everything ! A child !’

‘ Nay, Dorinda ! Even though there be a child, try to remember you have also been to blame ; even now, by repentance and gentleness——’

‘ Am I a “gentle” nature?’ asked Dorinda, fiercely grinding her teeth. ‘ In England I could divorce him, but in our cursed religion——’

‘ Hush !’ returned Olive, shocked and angry, ‘ if you speak like that, I cannot listen,—cannot stay with you.’

Dorinda seemed as though she heard not, and was plunged in thought, and she only spoke once more before they got back to the hotel; then she said:

‘Nothing could legitimize that child,—could it? Not even—my death, and his subsequent marriage—with the mother?’

‘Not in England, I know,’ answered Olive, ‘but I am not sure about France!’

Again Dorinda was immersed in thought, but said no more.

On their return to the hotel, Madame Dubois met them in the *ante-chambre*, without bonnet or cloak, although both ladies knew she could not possibly have returned many minutes.

‘Ah ! Madame Dubois,’ said the princess, amiably, but with a dangerous glitter in her eye, ‘*Toujours prête !* What a pity you stayed in the house, this lovely day.’

‘I have plenty to do at home, Madame la Princesse,’ answered Dubois, sententiously.

‘Have you positively not been out ? Not even in the garden of the hotel ?’

‘Madame la Princesse, I have not left the house !’

Olive was shocked at this unequivocal untruth ; Dorinda was quite delighted, as she felt she had a good grip of her enemy.

‘Ah, well ! we saw some one—*so* like

you—in a *fiacre* close behind us, and she kept close to us during the whole drive!—and I chanced to see—the person's face (didn't we, Olive?) and—and—*it was you!* And you have only this moment got home—and there are your bonnet and shawl—hid behind that chair! and, do you know,' added Dorinda, smiling charmingly, 'that—I'm afraid—*you are a liar!*'

Olive thought she should have fainted; Madame Dubois only smiled—such a smile as one would not care to see, for malignity was in every dimple of it,—and she turned and silently left the room.

'Oh, how *could* you, Dorinda?' said Olive, terrified.

‘I was determined she should not think she had hoodwinked me!’

‘You are too foolish, Dorinda! Be sure a woman with *such* a face neither forgives nor forgets!’

‘Ah, well!’ answered Dorinda, recklessly, ‘she won’t harm me, for I have *one* friend—a very influential one—amongst my husband’s relations, too! She will defend me! She smiles at me, when others frown, and she will come down out of her frame some night—when I am restless,—some of those dreadful nights when I can’t sleep—and she’ll rock me off!—won’t you, madame?’ Dorinda said, smiling at the ‘grim old lady.’

‘Dorinda, you *are* so childish! Ah, I

wish you would make friends with the living about you—not with the dead !’

‘Do you ?’ said Dorinda, dreamily ; ‘ I wonder which will be of most use to me—soon ?’

But Olive had turned away and did not hear these last words.

In about a quarter-of-an-hour Monsieur Achille appeared, looking angry.

‘Now, Achille,’ said the princess, ‘ I know what you are come about,—and I won’t be scolded ! You should not have sent her after me,—a direct insult to Lady Olive—as if you could not trust her ! and,’ grinding her teeth savagely and stamping her foot, ‘ she is a liar, and I am glad I told her so !’

Achille looked attentively at Dorinda, and said, calmly,

‘ Princess, your behaviour is not only wrong, but foolish—and, remember, *you are harming yourself*, and I will not leave this room till you have apologised to Madame Dubois !’

‘ I won’t, Achille !’

‘ You will, Madame la Princesse !’

‘ Who will make me do so ?’

‘ Your own good sense.’

‘ What will happen if I do not ?’

‘ Madame, I never threaten, *néanmoins*—now—I insist !’

‘ She lied, Achille.’

‘ You know your own proverb ; you should have asked no questions ! After all,

she was only doing what she conceived to be her duty ; so, Madame la Princesse, you *will* apologise—and at once.'

'Very well,' answered Dorinda, sulkily.
'Send for her !'

Here Olive left the room, and Madame Dubois was sent for.

'Were you out, Madame Dubois ?' insisted Dorinda.

'I was, Madame la Princesse.'

'Then why did you say you were not ?' asked Dorinda, rudely ; 'but Monsieur Achille says I am to apologise—and I do so !—so, consider yourself apologised to !'

Madame Dubois bowed coldly, and left the princess, who burst into tears.

‘You are cruel, Achille. You pretend to be my friend, and you should not have sent her out to watch me!’

‘Madame, I did not say I had done so. But she thought to do her duty—and she must not—shall not, be insulted; you are very foolish—and make me very unhappy!’ *—M. A. Shapard.*

‘Achille—I am sorry—really sorry! for I would not make you unhappy! dear, kind Achille!’

‘*Bon!*’ said the little man, ‘I will try to make it right, but such an outburst must not occur again; for Madame Dubois said she was afraid!’

‘But she was not.’

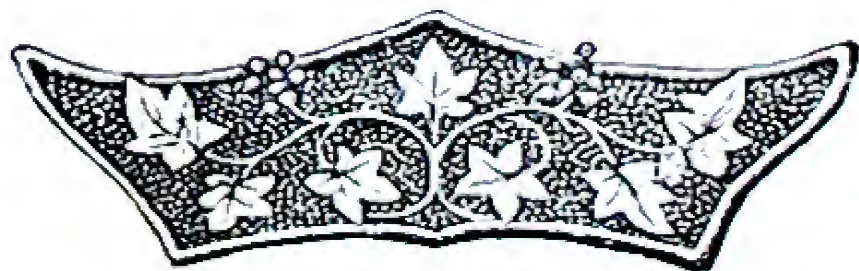
‘*She said she was, and that you were violent!*
You are injuring yourself! Pray—pray
keep in mind *what I warned you about.*’

‘Ah, well! Achille, I am no longer
afraid of anyone! She can’t injure me!’

‘What do you mean, princess?’ asked
Achille, looking thoughtfully at her.
‘Why have you no fear?’

‘Because, Achille,’ said Dorinda, casting
herself in his arms, like an unhappy
child, ‘I have *no hope!* but—I never—
never will offend you more! *Allons*, dear
kind Achille!’ she added, affectionately,
‘be friendly again—for I am very—very
heartbroken!’ And she confided to him
her meeting with her husband in the
brougham.

Kissing her hand, the old doctor could not trust himself to speak,—but he hurried from the room, shaking his head mournfully.

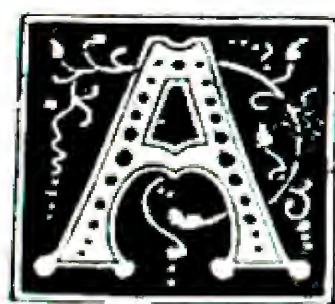




CHAPTER XII.

‘ Mercy

Is an attribute of God Himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God’s
When mercy seasons justice.’



AFTER dinner, the princess wept a good deal, and complained of headache, said she would retire early to rest, and would Olive come and sit by her bed-side a little ?

Olive agreed to do so, and, in about an hour's time, Estelle came and fetched Lady Olive; and as she entered the room she thought she had never seen anyone, in her life, so beautiful as Dorinda!

She was lying in the old carved bedstead, with its heavy violet hangings; the sheets were like snow, and frilled with deep lace, and a large white satin coverlet embroidered in gold was thrown over the whole.

The princess was deeply flushed, and her blue-gray eyes seemed to wander anxiously around—like those of some hard-driven, weary animal. Her night-dress was of cobweb fineness, scarcely concealing the dazzling fairness of the delicate body

and limbs. A heap of costly lace fell from her neck, concealing her bosom, while her long, gold-brown hair lay unfettered around her.

She held out a burning little hand to Olive, as she came in, and motioned Estelle to place a chair by her bedside.

‘Try to prevent our being disturbed,’ she whispered to Estelle, ‘for I have still a great deal to tell Lady Olive.’

‘I will—madame; and if I cough you will know you are being watched.’

She then left, and Dorinda at once began :

‘Olive, I have a presentiment I shall not live much longer,—my dear, don’t in-

interrupt me, for time is precious, but listen!—I have got another confession to make—which will ease my mind—and afterwards—if you are not too much shocked—I shall ask you to do a few things for me,—and, Olive, if, after you return to happy Old England, you should hear that I have fled to God's tender mercies—instead of remaining under those of the wicked (which are cruel, so very cruel) you will forgive me all I have done,—and pity my memory!

‘Dorinda!’ said Olive weeping, ‘nothing you can tell me—as I told you before—will ever alter my love; but, dear one, before confessing to me, should you not do so—to God? for, oh, remember that if your

poor husband is unforgiving, your God is not !’

‘ Then—do you solemnly declare that nothing I could ever tell you would alter you to me ?’

‘ Nothing, Dorinda ! So help me God !’

‘ Not even if I were to tell you that, in spite of your kindness and love, I have been cheating you—deceiving you for years ? That a common,—vulgar thief lies before you,—smothered in white satin and lace !’ and, suddenly pulling down her coverlet, ‘ Look here !’ she said, and to Olive’s amazement she saw—beneath the clouds of satin—a heap of jewels, amongst which she recognized many of

her own, which she had lost years and years ago !

She was thunderstruck—and all the more so when—on looking up,—she saw Dorinda in fits of laughter—at her friend's bewilderment,—and full of unmistakable exultation at these trophies of her talent and adroitness.

In much distress Olive rose,—but Dorinda caught her hand, as though fearful of her leaving, and said, still laughing :

‘Yes, those things are mostly yours ! I took them, dear, from under your very nose ! Then,—this chain belongs to the duchess,—and this pin to poor old “Uncle Chevy” ! He would have given me his

head, if I had asked it; but I preferred—the pin! and this belongs to Lady——, and that to Lord——, etc., etc.; and oh! Olive, it really *was* great fun! I used to hide, (and, I assure you, once or twice I saw some very funny things), and then I would pounce out of my hiding-place—(when people were gone)—and take all I wanted. Although I had money enough and to spare to buy anything I wanted, *that* was not the same thing,—*I wanted what other people had*, and I *got them!* and, when I wore them, (which I did—boldly—before their owners,) I invented stories about them,—and gulled them all! Ha! ha! ha!’

Olive was alarmed, and for the first

time she felt that Dorinda was indeed—mad ! and pity,—loving pity,—filled her soul for the wretched woman !

‘ Oh, Dorinda ! ’ she said, sinking on her knees by the bed, and hiding her face upon the feverish hand that clutched her own. ‘ *Don’t*—don’t laugh like *that* ! better weep tears of blood, than exult over the breaking of God’s holy laws ! My poor,—my beloved friend ! I love you, and would give my life cheerfully to see you happy—to save your soul ! ’

Dorinda looked at her in a dazed, perplexed way, and her voice had quite changed, when she said, wearily :

‘ What have I been saying ? Oh ! yes. I know I have told you all—or nearly all

—now! but—get up!’ she added, hastily, to the still kneeling and weeping Olive—‘for I hear Estelle coughing. She—Dubois is near at hand! For God’s sake, calm yourself.’

Three light taps on Estelle’s floor soon warned Dorinda that the danger was past, so then she continued:

‘You know, Olive, I have had no friend here but Estelle, and she has to pretend she is my enemy! Just think, Olive—*no friends!* except—my old lady up there! She smiles—do you see?—and asks me—sometimes to do—something for her.’

Olive was afraid Dorinda was getting excited again; but the princess restrained herself, and said, quite calmly:

‘What I want you to do for me—is this. When you get back to England and see dear old Uncle Chevy, tell him I really loved him—he was always good to me; and Margaret, poor Margaret, ask her for the good God’s sake to forgive me! Tell her Guy never really loved me. Bernard thought I was guilty, but I was not, Olive. Bernard’s vanity was hurt, and he did not care to look closely into it, or he would have known. Guy was not my lover. He loved Margaret really, but—as men love. And now, Olive, there is something very sacred for you to do!’

‘I will do anything, my dear, dear Dorinda, and you may be sure that God will look lovingly and pityingly upon the

only reparation you can make ; and you will yet live to be happy—and forgiven. A monument of sweet repentance, and of God's loving mercy.'

Dorinda smiled sorrowfully and passed her hand caressingly over Olive's bowed head.

'Listen,' she whispered, and putting her hand into her bosom she drew out a paper, and, opening it, disclosed a faded piece of lilac ; pressing her lips to it, she said, ' Will you—when—when you leave me, go to Jasper—the only man I ever really loved—and give him this ; I picked it the day I saw him last—from the branch that always " tap-taps " at the window of his sitting-room. Tell him I never loved but

him—I never stole anything from *him*, for’ (with a sob and a little wail) ‘my darling was blind—blind! Oh, my Jasper! Tell him that—had he married me, he would have saved my soul! Nay, don’t tell him that—it would pain him. Tell him, rather, that he has been my one holy thought. Oh! Jasper—Jasper!’ and her tears fell fast.

‘But, Dorinda, will you not try for your husband’s forgiveness?’

‘Yes—yes—I am coming to that; but first promise me you will do all I have asked you.’

‘My dear, I will!’

‘Thank you, darling; and now about the prince. Go, dear, now, and ask him

to forgive me,—to take me back to his heart. If he will, I will be good, humble, grateful—and a devoted wife ! I will live where and how he chooses, so that he forgives me. Tell him I have been weak, worldly, silly, cold, heartless, but not guilty,—so help me God !—at least, not of the sin that *he* accuses me of. Ask him, as he hopes for forgiveness himself, to give me one more trial. Olive, say these very words, “ Bernard, if you will forgive her, *you will save her life* ” ; those very words, Olive, “ *you will save her life.* ” Now go ; but kiss me first.’

‘ I will go at once, Dorinda ; and God go with me ! ’

‘ Wait, love ! I will get up—and put on

a dressing-gown that he used to admire—a pretty one—to receive him in—when he comes !’

Calling Estelle, she put on a soft white garment—in which she looked like a being of the other world; then, dismissing the Frenchwoman with a gentle kiss, she sat down in a chair before the cheval-glass.

‘Now, Olive,—go and beg him to come !’





CHAPTER XIII.

‘ Diseases desperate grown,
By desperate appliances are relieved.’



WITH fear and trembling Olive left the room on her mission, and the moment she was alone Dorinda sprang upon the chair placed beneath the ‘grim old lady’s’ portrait, and, hurriedly reaching down the leather flask she had concealed on the ledge

behind it, seized a glass, and poured out the laudanum.

‘He said it was enough to kill a regiment of soldiers,’ she whispered. ‘Poor, kind old Achille!’

Then, kissing her hand to the ‘grim old woman,’ she again placed herself opposite the mirror—to await her fate.

‘If he forgives me—well and good! but if he does not—ah, it is a pity’ (glancing at herself in the mirror) ‘to put an end to so pretty a thing! but—it has been *such an unhappy thing!*’

In about half-an-hour Olive returned—pale, exhausted, weeping!

‘*He will not come!*’ she said. ‘He will

not forgive—my poor Dorinda—my poor—poor friend !’

Dorinda sat quite calmly, looking at her,—as though scarcely comprehending Olive’s words.

‘*Merci, chère,*’ she then said, simply ; and, turning to the dressing-table, Olive saw her reflection in the mirror, as she coolly took a glass standing there, and quickly drank some dark-looking liquid,—drinking—drinking down to the dregs.

‘I am *deadly thirsty,*’ she said, noticing Olive’s questioning look in the mirror,—and laughed.

‘But *what* are you drinking?’ asked Olive, uneasily—she thought Dorinda looked so strange.

‘Toast-and-water, of course,—why? But tell me—what did my husband say?’ asked Dorinda, rather unsteadily, and looking fixedly at the clock.

‘Oh, don’t ask me!’ said poor Olive, in an agony of sorrow; ‘my poor Dorinda, he was hard, cruel——’ and, approaching the princess to kiss her, she started,—then exclaimed, hoarsely,

‘But what is that smell, Dorinda? What have you done?’

‘What neither God—nor the devil—nor an angel like you—can undo!’

Rushing to the dressing-table, Olive took up the glass,—smelt it,—and ran shrieking into Estelle. ‘Estelle—Estelle—get the doctor—the princess has poisoned herself!’

And, as she returned to the room, she was just in time to catch Dorinda, who sank almost powerless into her arms !

‘Fetch the doctor, for God’s sake, Madame Dubois, instead of standing there!’ exclaimed Olive, to the terrified *dame de compagnie*, who was quickly on the spot; ‘and you, Estelle, come here! Oh, Dorinda! Dorinda! what have you done,—where can Achille be!’

But, as is generally the case in such emergencies, the one necessary individual—Achille—was absent—not to be found! Being past midnight, there was great difficulty,—much delay in getting medical aid; then—when it was too late—three

or four doctors arrived simultaneously—tumbling over each other in their hurry—and hating each other with jealous hatred ! At last poor Achille appeared ! Every remedy had been—and was again resorted to,—but unavailingly !

Lying deathly pale, in Olive's arms, her hand clasped in that of the faithful Estelle's, Dorinda makes Achille a sign to approach.

‘ Kiss me,—Achille ! Kind,—good friend !’

He kisses her and sobs out the words :

‘ Oh ! I loved you, dear ! I loved you !’

At this moment poor weeping Estelle takes a crucifix, and, with passionate eager-

ness, implores her dying mistress to kiss the emblem of a Saviour's everlasting love ; and, as Dorinda reverently does so,—the door opens,—and the prince appears, pale and stern.

Dorinda opens her heavy eyes,—sees her husband,—shudders, and whispering ‘ My jailer ! ’ turns her head wearily, drowsily,—hides her face in Olive's bosom,—and passes away into the Land where all things are forgotten.





CHAPTER XIV.

‘Thou shoulds’t not have been old till thou hadst been wise.’



ADEN with sorrow, Olive still remembered her words to Dorinda, ‘I will never forsake you!’ and, taking them literally, she waited with Estelle, to see the last of the lovely dead face. Placing a cross of forest flowers (which had been sent from Broke Abbey, without the name of the giver)

upon the silent breast, she kissed the now peaceful brow ; and the two faithful women waited to see the cover—which was to shut out so much beauty—placed and fixed for ever ;—at least, till that Great Day, when the dead will burst their bonds, and each take their own place in the long procession to Judgment, and (thank God!)—to Mercy,—the Mercy which endureth for ever !

Less sickened at the necessary inquiries into, and details of, the awful death (to which she had been so innocent a witness, and to which she had to attest) than at the prince's scarcely-concealed satisfaction at so unexpected a termination to what had been to him a perplexity and con-

stant source of annoyance, Lady Olive left the Hotel de la Styrie, refusing to take part in the funeral; but when the ceremony was over (she having been a spectator at a distance), and when both guests and officials had departed, she approached the grave, and as she was sitting there—with Estelle, weeping—she felt a touch upon her shoulder. It was Monsieur Achille, pale and heart-broken.

‘Come away,’ he said; ‘you are leaving to-night, and must have rest.’

Olive rose, and, after one farewell glance at the grave, she walked with Achille to her lodgings, dazed and miserable. Throwing herself down on a couch, she wept long and bitterly; then, taking Achille’s hand, she said :

‘ God bless you, dear friend, for having been such a comfort—such a help to that poor, erring woman lying out there—alone! Oh! guilty of many sins she may have been—and was——’

‘ And hardly responsible for any!’ put in the old doctor; ‘ for the border-line betwixt unrestrained badness and unrestrainable madness, is very faint—very indistinct! Indeed, there is no perception of having crossed it, till many miles have been travelled—on the other side, in the regions of insanity;—regions abounding in bewildering mazes, out of which the poor wanderer rarely can be extricated!’

‘ Achille!’ said Lady Olive, after some

minutes' thought ; ' what shall I do about Estelle ? I feel as if I could not leave her here alone. Shall I take her away with me ?'

' Oh, dear lady, I have already settled that ! I have a large house in the country—full of patients ; (my life is spent in the service of those poor creatures ;) and she has promised to be housekeeper in my Paris house. I shall always love her for—her sake ! My dearest friend (if I may call you so), I have just sent her away—as I would not allow you to say adieu to her ; you have already as much as you can bear ! And now—farewell !' (kissing Lady Olive's hand), ' I will meet you at the *Gare* ;' and he left her.

Olive now laid down wearily on the

sofa, with her eyes closed, trying to rest till such time as she should start; and she was just falling off into an uneasy slumber when she heard a footstep, and, looking up hurriedly, she beheld the Prince de la Styrie by her side!

She had done everything she could to avoid this painful meeting; so, springing up from her recumbent attitude, she exclaimed haughtily:

‘Monsieur le Prince, may I ask the cause of this unwarrantable intrusion?’

She felt she hated him; as the last time she had had any conversation with him, she had pleaded for poor Doriinda’s pardon—and in vain!

‘I know I am unwelcome, Lady Olive,’

the prince said,—‘that I have no right here ;
—but I wished to bid you farewell,—to say
a few parting words—to thank you for—
your——’

Olive waived her hand with dignity.

‘I beg, Monsieur le Prince, that you
will leave me ; I am fatigued—distressed,
—and require rest, before leaving for
England.’

‘Lady Olive ! I implore you to forgive
this intrusion ! I knew,—had I begged
an interview,—that (with scant justice—I
venture to think,) you would have refused
it ! And, having had a greater respect for
you than I have ever had for *any* woman,
I felt impelled to say a few words to you !
Will you listen to them ?’

Lady Olive unwillingly bowed her head.

‘I suppose I have no choice,’ she said.

The prince went on: ‘Oh, forgive my boldness!—I will not detain you long—but I wished,—I implore you—not to judge me harshly,—till you have heard me,—for I value your opinion more than that of any earthly being!’

‘Prince Bernard!’ said Olive, wondering what all this was to lead to, ‘I am quite at a loss as to what you can possibly have to say to me now. Not many days ago,’ added she, with difficulty restraining her tears at the recollection, ‘your value of my opinion and wishes was not very great. If you remember, Prince, I actually knelt at your feet—in an agony of

despair,—telling you that my poor friend's reason—life—everything, depended upon your forgiveness; you turned from me then——'

('Not from you,' interrupted Prince Bernard.)

'—But, thank God—*now*—our opinions of each other—cannot be of the least possible importance.'

'Oh! say not so, madame, and let me explain to you—that you cannot—cannot know—all the truth. *She* was not truthful—I am—a man of truth!'

'Sir!' said Olive, with quick scorn, 'I was always taught that a "man of truth" and honour, was one who bore out both attributes,—not only in his conversation

—but in his relations in life,—to those nearest to him.’ (The Frenchman winced.) ‘Truth and honour,’ continued Lady Olive, ‘can only be proved by temptation ; where were your truth and honour—to your wife? your marital truth and honour!’

‘Once more, Lady Olive, she cannot have told you all, so listen. When I married her—I loved her——’

‘Her beauty—perhaps,’ broke in Olive.

‘Mais, mon Dieu ! c’est la même chose !’

Olive smiled disdainfully.

‘I loved her—I gave her everything I had—I refused her nothing—I forgave her follies and imprudencies—and I was—a good husband—then. *En revanche*, she

never loved me (she told me so), she took everything I gave her, and deceived me whenever she could! (No doubt she forgot to tell you all this! Hein?) She brought me to the direst disgrace. No other husband would have acted as I did by her,—after discovering all I did about her girlhood;—no! Others would have discarded her at once. I did not,—I was anxious to save——’

‘An *ésclandre*,’ said Olive, rather unfairly.

‘Well—yes! an *ésclandre*, which would have injured her reputation as well as my own! I gave her a home,—money,—(which was all *she* cared for)—what could I do more!’

‘ You might have forgiven her ; and have saved a life certainly—and perhaps a soul ! You are wrong, Monsieur le Prince, in thinking she did not tell me all her sins ;—she did—she told me all ; but, whatever her sin, you dealt unfairly by her thus : you wrote and told her you did not part from her, (banishing her from a husband’s presence and love,) because of her mania, *but because of her sin with Sir Guy* ; a sin—which I am prepared to swear she did *not* commit, but which you would not even search into,—nor would you allow her any opportunity to clear or condemn herself. No ! you shut her up—in a sort of living tomb—and *you drove her to her death*. Now listen, prince !—for the sake of argu-

ment, let us say, she did sin with Sir Guy! Believe me, that is not a sin I look lightly upon,—*I abhor it*; but, are *you* the man to cast a stone at her? The discovery she made that afternoon of *your sin*, drove her to despair and death. The sin you accused her of—and of which *I know* she was guiltless—you committed *openly*,—*shamelessly* (in that perhaps you *are* a man of truth!), and yet, when I implored your mercy and pardon for her, you refused,—and—you know the rest! Prince! your harshness and cruelty murdered her! Take care! The day *will* come when *you* will implore forgiveness, and be refused! Prince! God concludes us all under sin, (although perhaps not under that especial

one,) and all we *can* do is to forgive one another ! That is—if we expect to be forgiven ! Now farewell, Prince Bernard, and may God teach you to be merciful as well as just.’

‘ Wait, Lady Olive ! I am full of sorrow, —of misery !——’

‘ And what right have you to complain ? You have sinned also, and you have sent her, for all you know, to an eternity of sorrow and misery !’

‘ She was a bad woman !’ he said, passionately, ‘ and you—in your silly championship,—are making a Heroine of her,—because she is dead ! She may have been—a Heroine ; but—one of the wrong sort ! Your excessive love for her, makes

you blind—Lady Olive! She was—I repeat it—a bad woman!

‘And are you—good?’ asked Olive, with scorn. ‘No! you—and all like you—men, are generally “bad” every day and all day long! and yet—you go unpunished—here! I may be,—and probably am,—illogical in what I say concerning one who sinned, (it is true,) but who suffered also;—and whose suffering had so softened her, that had you not hopelessly condemned her, she would have been true to her repentance, and to her love for the man who had forgiven her—for Christ’s sake! But you rejected her despair,—her cry for mercy, and her brain gave way! God forgive *you*, Prince Bernard, “in that dread

day,"—and her also. Farewell !' and she rose to leave him.

'Olive !' he said, in great agitation, 'can't you see ! can't you see ! Do you not know that your truth,—your steadfastness,—your power of love to her, your hatred of sin, your bitter contempt for myself;—all—all are killing me ! For God's sake, Olive, give me hope that some day—some blessed day, I shall see you again !'

'Prince Bernard !' exclaimed Olive, scathingly, 'what do you *dare* to mean ! Let me pass ! and I pray God I may never see you again !' and with these words she left him.

* * * * *

As the Prince de la Styrie will not re-appear in our pages, we may as well state here that once more,—(a year later,)—he endeavoured to re-open negotiations with Lady Olive; and she (whom time had taught to modify some of her bitterness—and to look upon Dorinda's wretched story in a fairer light) answered his letter kindly—but firmly; and ere long Prince Bernard took to himself another wife;—young,—fair,—and devoted to him. One son (the child so unfortunately forced upon Dorinda's observation) was legitimized; and another was also born to them.

To this day the elder son bears his father's name, and possesses his vast wealth.



CHAPTER XV.

‘Heaven is above all yot.’

WHEN Olive arrived at the *Gare*, she was almost relieved to find that poor Achille had done exactly what she suspected he would. He sent her a large *bouquet*, with a note in it, to take his place,—but spared her the pain of a farewell, and she had full leisure to weep over his letter and recover

herself, before she arrived at Boulogne and got on board the boat.

She returned straight to Kensington, and never rested till she had fulfilled Dorinda's solemn charge, by restoring all the jewels to their different owners; (some of them being individuals who have never appeared in our story). Then she started for Broke Abbey.

Iona met her mother alone on her arrival, and was wild with delight at the re-union, and it was the first real happiness poor Olive had tasted for weeks, to see her child looking blooming and happy.

'Oh, mamma!' Iona exclaimed, after many kisses and embraces, 'just fancy! Miss de Broke was married this morning!'

‘What! Henrietta Maria?’

‘Yes,—isn’t it funny! She has married the new vicar, and will now live at the Vicarage. The marriage was a very quiet one, for Sir Jasper is ill, and could not appear, so Julian—Mr. Julian de Broke—gave her away; and—would you believe it!—she *would* wear white satin and pearls—and a wreath of orange blossoms—and she looked so fat and red!’

‘Hush, Iona! She has been your hostess, so you should say nothing about her;—but who will take care of poor Sir Jasper! She used to be so fond of him—and now there are no ladies in the family.’

A bright blush suffused Iona's face, of which Lady Olive took no notice, although she marked it—and she watched the girl narrowly as she spoke.

‘And who is staying at the Abbey? Not anybody that I know, I hope, for I feel very tired—very sad.’

‘The duchess is there, (she has been my *chaperon*, as you know,) and—and Mr. Julian de Broke is there also. Leonora and Sir Guy are coming next week—and that is all; but poor Uncle Jasper has been so ill—so low and unhappy the last few weeks.’

‘*Uncle Jasper!*’ repeated Olive, ‘has it come to that, Iona?’

‘Oh, mother—mother!’ said the girl, throwing herself into her mother's arms,

‘ I had meant to keep it in—till I get home ; but I can’t ! for I am so—so happy ! Julian de Broke told me yesterday he loves me, and I love him too—and oh, mamma ! he is going to ask you, to give me to him—and, to take him to your heart as your son !’

A slight throb, like a stab, went through the mother’s heart, keeping her silent for a moment, and the thought : ‘ Iona is mine no longer !’ shot through Olive’s brain ; but checking it,—as an unworthy one,—she pressed the child to her breast, and said,

‘ He shall be very dear to me—darling ! but tell me about it. I have come out of so much grief and shadow, that

your happiness dazzles me like light after darkness.'

'Oh, yes, mamma! I hate myself for feeling so happy, when you and dear Uncle Jasper are so sad.'

Olive stooped and kissed her child.

'But tell me—darling—to which of the twins are you——?'

'Oh, don't you know,' exclaimed Iona, gravely, 'that Edward Julian—the younger brother—is dead? He had some great sorrow, Julian told me,—and could not get over it, so he thought to comfort himself (he was a great sportsman) by slaughtering innocent wild animals, and he went out to India. He constantly wrote to his uncle and aunt saying he was well and happy—

and three or four mails ago, he told them he was going the next day to a tiger-hunt. The next communication we received was written in a strange hand,—from the Consul of a place called Ramnad;—stating that a young man named Edward de Broke had just been brought into his bungalow dangerously wounded by a tiger. The young man himself knew he was very badly wounded, and at his desire the Consul wrote to Julian to prepare him for any further shock. We looked out anxiously for the next mail,—and alas! the letter had a black edge! It was from the same Consul—saying poor Edward had died,—after sending an affectionate and grateful message to his uncle,—and his watch and chain to his brother—to

my poor Julian !' (here Iona dropped some tears) 'and he also sent a message of forgiveness to "Dorinda." He was buried the next day—and the doctor wrote a medical certificate.

'Sir Jasper, who had been very depressed for some weeks—no one seemed to know why,' ('I know!' thought Olive, sorrowfully),—'quite broke down after Edward's death,—confined himself to his own rooms, and has not been amongst us since;—and I hear he won't eat anything, and his only pleasure is playing the organ. He is longing to see you, mamma!—for, ah, mother—you comfort everybody.'

By this time they had arrived at Broke Abbey. Lady Olive was warmly wel-

comed by the duchess—and also by young Julian; and when she saw the duchess's kind face, so associated in her mind with Dorinda, she fairly gave way, and sitting on a chair in the hall, behind a screen,—burst into tears! After a few minutes—some one took her hand from her eyes—and she beheld Iona and her beloved Julian, kneeling by her side. The young man, whose love for Iona seemed to have opened the sluices of his heart, and who was grieving heartily for the death of his own much-loved brother,—could and did sympathize with Olive's sorrow, and throwing his arm round her, he kissed her cheek, and whispered, 'Oh, let me be your son, Lady Olive! I will be a good one!'

Olive smiled through her tears, and, putting Iona's hand in his, said, softly,

‘Be kind to her—Julian.’

After Lady Olive had rested herself, she felt anxious to deliver herself of Dorinda's message to Sir Jasper; and, taking Julian aside, she asked him to find out when she might see his uncle. Julian went at once into Sir Jasper's room—and came out quickly, saying,

‘He is longing to see you—come now!’

With a beating heart, Lady Olive crossed the music-room, and entered Sir Jasper's private sitting-room. She found him standing—to receive her—and, putting out both hands, he clasped

Lady Olive's—and made her sit by him.

‘Lady Olive,’ he said, ‘I feel sure you have some message for me—from one—one I loved very dearly.’

‘And one—Sir Jasper,’ Olive said, softly, ‘who tenderly loved you.’

‘Olive! (may I call you so?) I know she really did so—once!’

‘She loved you with all her power of loving—and to the end! Oh, think gently and mercifully of her many faults, for indeed—at times—she was not responsible for them. The doctor assured me her mind had for years—and perhaps all her life—been unhinged at intervals.’

‘You need not tell me, dear friend,’ said Sir Jasper, ‘to think mercifully and forgiv-

ingly of her, for I loved her so intensely, that, had it not been that others of my family were concerned in her faults, I should—oh ! how gladly !—have taken her to my heart, have kept her straight—here ; and have led her—in the end—up to God !’

‘ She had been badly brought up, Sir Jasper, without religion or truth ; then her marriage was unfortunate—for she only married for a home. She did not care for her husband, and even his kindness and liberality failed to touch her, for her heart was yours ! But I am convinced that the bitter malice and deceit she showed to him and to others, came from an unhinged mind. I always had a theory concerning her—that she was an embodiment of one

of those unfortunate creatures we hear of in Holy Writ—energized, more or less, in different degrees—and at different times—by the Devil. If you remember, we are told that, *at times*, the wretched demoniac was more in the power of the Devil that possessed him, than at others; throwing him into the fire, &c., &c.,—and I believe this to have been the case with Dorinda—and with many others who commit madly wicked,—inexplicable crimes! Her death too,—that awful death by her own hand,—even that act we must judge with caution,—or still better, not judge at all! but leave it to Him Who, seeing secret sins, sees also secret excuses.

‘ Oh! Sir Jasper, who knows but that a

happy, holy home and praying mother, might have exorcised the demon which,—according to medical testimony,—had been at hand, from her earliest youth, laying wait to destroy her! and which, on the dreadful night of her death, rushed in upon her,—overwhelming her as a flood! But now her suffering life is over—and be sure she will obtain infinite mercy, as well as infinite justice. It is better to fall into the hand of God than into that of man! Now, dear Sir Jasper, I must give you her exact message. She said, “Go to Jasper—my only love—and give him this spray of lilac. I picked it the wretched day that I bid him farewell (would God I had died that day!) It comes from the bush that

‘tap-taps’ at his own window-pane. I have worn it in this morocco-case—in my bosom ever since. Tell him, Olive, that I never loved anyone but him. Tell him if he had married me then, he would have saved my soul!” Then she paused and said, “No, don’t tell him that, it would pain him—but tell him that he was the one good, pure thought of my life.”

‘That was the message,’ added Lady Olive, ‘but I must tell you that I broke off a piece of the lilac to bury it with her, and laid it where it had rested so long—on her breast.’

Sir Jasper was much affected, and, taking the piece of lilac, carried it with reverence to his lips, and, after a few

minutes' silence, took the weeping Olive's hand, and said,

‘ You were her guardian Angel—and God bless you for it ! Be sure my life will be one of gratitude to you—proved by my making a happy home for your child Iona !’





L'ENVOI.

'The atmosphere
Breathes rest and comfort, and the many chambers
Seem full of welcomes.'

THE years come—and the years
go by, and little children's
footsteps patter about the
galleries and the gardens of old Broke
Abbey, while their pretty games and
quaint sayings often bring a gentle

smile to the face of the beautiful old blind man who rests his hand upon Iona's shoulder.

Lady Olive passes her gentle life between Broke Abbey and her own beloved Riverstairs, where another batch of little ones greet her—the children of Guy and Leonora Deverill.

Margaret never married, but she became the *chatelaine* of Brandon Castle,—left to her by the childless Duke and Duchess of Cheviotdale,—with enormous wealth ; and her name has become a household word for good and charitable works. All bitter feeling between her and her cousin Guy has long since died out, and his wife and children have even

been seen playing beneath the ‘mullioned window.’

And the Miss Woodcocks! We must not forget to pay some small tribute to their memory! Two green mounds—alas! announce to us that Janetta and Barbara are now—nothing but a memory!—but ‘their good works do follow them!’ for many of their pupils keep their grass green, and plant lovely flowers which spring up luxuriantly from out their honoured dust.

Miss Lucinda is Miss Lucinda still,—but now she is a rich ‘Miss Lucinda,’ and will remain so, unless she be foolish enough to listen too favourably to Monsieur Auguste Laménotte’s honied words! Will

she? or will she not? Time will shew!—
and when Auguste himself is questioned,
he answers, with a smile:

‘Tout vient a point—à celui qui sait
attendre!’

THE END.

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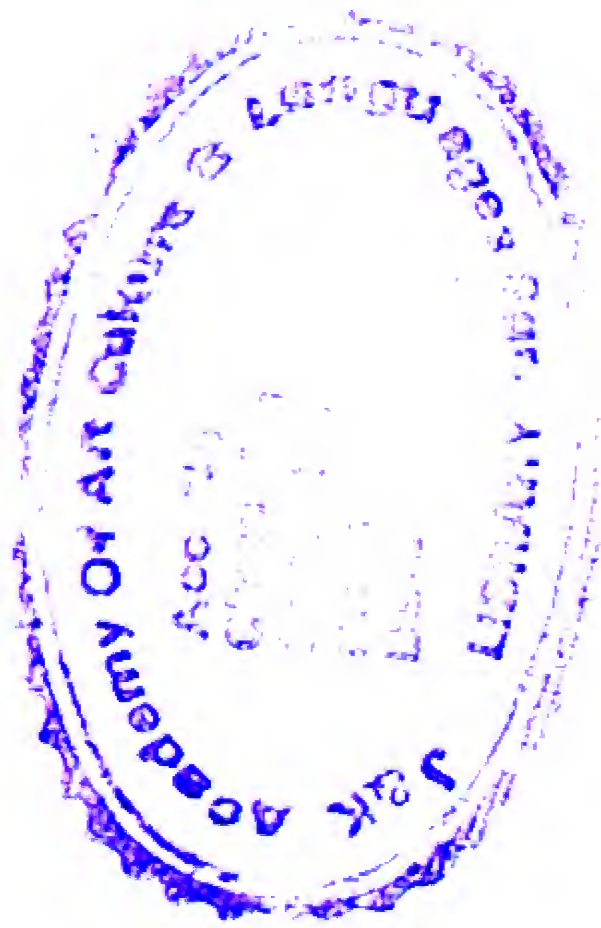
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